

SOCRATES PERSISTS IN INDIA

BY

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*Author of Socrates in an Indian Village, The Remaking of Village India,
A Scheme of Rural Reconstruction, etc.*

WITH EIGHT CARTOONS

BY

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TO THE PUNJAB VILLAGER
 SO PATIENT, SO HOSPITABLE, SO LOVABLE
 YET SO HEART-BREAKING
 IN THE WAY IN WHICH HE FOR EVER POSTPONES
 THE DOING OF THOSE FEW SIMPLE THINGS
 WHICH HE KNOWS WELL ENOUGH WILL MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE
 TO THE HEALTH, WEALTH AND HAPPINESS OF HIS
 HOME AND VILLAGE

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INTRODUCTION

THE very kindly reception accorded to the first record of his village conversations has encouraged Socrates to try again. Ever since the first volume appeared the Indian Army has welcomed Socrates in its weekly newspaper, and never a week has passed, I believe, but the *Fauji Akhbar* has contained a dialogue. By the courtesy of its Editor, and by the kind help of the Oxford University Press on which fell the work of selection, this second volume has been put together. My thanks are also due to the *Punjab Boy Scout Bulletin*, another helper, in which several dialogues first saw the light.

Socrates is a persistent fellow ; some would go further and say he was a pestilent fellow, but no one who spends as much time in the villages as Socrates does will deny that there is plenty of excuse for everything he says. But Socrates is not the only one who knows all this about the village and sees how necessary it is to get a move on. See what the Royal Commission on Agriculture said of India :—

‘ If the inertia of centuries is to be overcome it is essential that all the resources at the disposal of the State should be brought to bear on the problem of rural uplift. What is required is an organized and sustained effort by all those Departments whose activities touch the lives and the surroundings of the rural population.’

Or, the Marquess of Linlithgow, the Chairman of that Commission :—‘ India’s wealth, in an overwhelming degree, is in her agriculture ; and upon the fields of her cultivators is founded the whole structure of India’s economy. The peasant,

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now as ever, is the chief source and creator of both her wealth and her greatness, and of him it may with truth be said that he is India.

And again :—‘ It is idle to expect a boy to reap the full advantage of literacy, whose mother and sisters can neither read nor write. No more potent instrument lies to hand for promoting rural development than a bold, determined, and persistent drive towards the goal of a sound primary education for the girlhood of the countryside. There, plain for all to see, but hitherto so little apprehended, lies the key to India’s future. Privileged indeed will be he who will seize it with a firm and purposeful hand and, brushing aside the doubters and the difficulties, unlock and open wide the door that stands bolted and barred by the rusty prejudice of the centuries between the women of India and the high destiny that awaits them.’

But the countryside is much the same all over the world. Listen to the Home Secretary speaking in Parliament about crime in England—and surely there is far more crime than there need be in our Indian village !—‘ Unquestionably by far the most important means of securing a diminution in crime is a general improvement in social conditions.’

Or, on top of everything, the evidence of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, the best-informed observer and the keenest reformer of us all. ‘ Agriculture and the social aspects of life in the country are parts of a single whole and cannot be divorced. Bad agricultural conditions depress the standard of village life, and bad social conditions react inevitably on agricultural efficiency.

‘ Then there are the playing fields. There are some people very active in trying to improve the health conditions of the countryside, and this is very important indeed, because it is those who are physically fit and whose minds are really alert

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who will be most successful in making two ears of corn grow where only one grew before.

' We need to regard life as a whole if we are to get the best out of it, and particularly in the country we must recognize that we shall only get the best by our own efforts. In the villages there are no amusements like cinema to fill the time, and no municipal authorities to provide ready-made amenities. There is thus the chance in the villages to develop the strength that comes from self-reliance, mutual service and combined action.

First of all, those activities which bring zest and keenness into the life of the villages have a direct influence on agricultural prosperity, and for that reason alone are well worth encouraging. Secondly, most of the things that are worth having can be won by self-effort if people will pull together. If you want a village hall, get together and see the thing through. If you think a Young Farmers' Club would be useful in the village, don't go on talking about it, but start it.

' Each man must, and can, work out his own salvation in common service. Whatever the coming years may hold of hardship and difficulty, we can win through triumphantly if only we will recognize that the future is in our own hands. . . . By all means let the State do all for us that it can, but it cannot do much more than give us conditions in which our individual task is made easier, and neither the State nor anyone else can relieve us of that task. . . . For this reason you should not think of Social Service purely as State action. Let us think of it rather as kindness between man and man—as mutual understanding—as all those acts of unselfish devotion that can be done by people without one thought of material gain or personal advancement. . . . The provision of State social services has perhaps lessened in some of us the sense of the need—the duty of *personal* service, and has

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encouraged a tendency to take all these things for granted—encouraged a readiness to *receive* without at the same time inculcating that readiness to *give*, which is the only justification for the privileges of citizenship. . . . The enemies to-day are apathy and depression. Apathy is worse than depression, because depression can be dispelled by action. If people, instead of sitting down and deplored what is wrong in village life, would face up to it and get busy, they would soon find that with apathy out of the way, they would cease to be depressed.'

There you are! East or West, the royal road to health, wealth and happiness in the village is the same :—hard work, self-help, personal service, and organization. Get together!

F. L. BRAYNE

Westwood

Great Ryburgh

Norfolk

August, 1932

I

A NEW LINE OF ATTACK

' You are a rare visitor, nowadays,' said the lambardar as Socrates settled into his usual seat under the pipal tree one evening.

' And well I may be,' answered the sage, mopping the sweat from his forehead. ' I have come from far, and I have further yet to go.'

' Why this restlessness? Are we not enough for you, Socrates?'

' More than enough with your foolish ways and blind loyalty to custom, but it is not you that I am running away from. I find that the further I wander the more need of my tongue—'

' Then we are not the only people with whom you have to find fault?' said the lambardar cheerfully, greatly pleased to think that there were other people to share with him the biting tongue of the sage.

' You the only people indeed! What an idea! I found them the same wherever I went on my travels. The same dirt, the same folly of not sending the girls to school, the same waste of health, money, time, and everything else, the same—'

' Then you had to start all over again in every place you visited, Socrates?'

' No; fortunately I was spared that, lambardarji. That would have quite broken my heart, I think. No, they knew me as soon as they saw me and knew why I had come and what I was going to find fault with.'

' What did you do then? You must have had to change your mood altogether.'

' You are right; I had to. There was no longer any need to search for the truth, even among the village muck-heaps.'

I no longer had to add question to question to extort it from unwilling minds. The people I met knew as well as I did what was wrong and how it could be put right.'

'Then what did you do, Socrates? You must have been quite at a loss with no one to try your bitter wit upon!'

'Never fear! I found enough, thank you, to keep my hand, or rather my tongue, in practice! But, as you have guessed, my task is different now, whether here or there. The evil is now well known, and the remedy is well known. East or west, north or south, the principles are the same and so too, in general, is the practice. In every new place, however, conditions vary somewhat. In one district, such as Gurgaon, poverty and the uncertainty of the harvest fill everyone's thoughts till they can think of nothing else and come to regard God as a blind force that is as often bent on their destruction as on their welfare. People in such places lose heart and, as poverty always brings sickness to people who do not know and follow the rules of health, and whose hearts are full of despair, their cup of trouble is more than full. Apathy is the worst enemy to fight in such a place, and the ignorance that helps to cause it. In another place such as Jhelum, the idleness and lack of occupation of a very virile and martial race were the chief problems. Work had to be found for the people and the dignity of work had to be taught.'

'But you are for ever saying that we must relieve the women of what work we can.'

'The women, yes, but I was referring to the men. The women are everywhere overworked with needless drudgery, the corn-mill and the dung-cake. It is not them I complain of. God knows they work hard enough. What I want for them is knowledge, knowledge of how to run a home and bring up a family in health and comfort, leisure from needless drudgery so that they can carry out what they have learnt to do, and the place of honour that is their right in the home. If the men did their part of the work half as well as the women did theirs, there would be no need of Socrates at all! The women are responsible for the cleaning of the house and yard and both are spotlessly clean. The men are responsible for the cleaning

of the village, and just look at the result—no, don't look, just shut your eyes and smell !'

' Yes, we were evidently wrong when we suggested that your tongue had lost its venom, Socrates ! '

' I am afraid it will be a long time before I can afford to lay by that weapon, lambardarji. But to return to our discussion, every district has its special needs, but everywhere certain things are the same. The villages are all dirty, and dirt, as you know, means bad crops and bad health ; everywhere the little girls must go to school, and with their brothers too, as that is the best and the only possible arrangement—'

' Yes, Socrates, whatever else is wrong with our villages, at any rate the little boys and girls can all attend the same school.'

' And in every village a lot of improvement can be made in your farming without any outlay of money, windows and ventilators are needed in nearly all your houses, and vaccination is everywhere given less attention than it deserves.'

' Almost every baby is vaccinated round here, Socrates.'

' That is not enough. Every child requires at least three vaccinations, and if it got them, in ten years or so, provided also you dug pits to keep your villages clean, and let enough light and air into your houses, small-pox would disappear from your country, and you would at any rate be able to chalk up one very big achievement to your credit. As it is, whenever my wife collects the babies in a village to look at them and to tell their mothers useful things about bringing them up, she finds one or more babies with this foul disease actually upon them.'

' Oh, yes, there is still plenty of small-pox about.'

' Then get rid of it. You already pay for the vaccinators. Make full use of them and get rid of one at least of your many troubles. Or do you like to have this vilest of all diseases about, to kill, blind or disfigure your precious children ? '

' God forbid, Socrates ! '

' Another thing which I find very much needed in every village is organized games to keep your young men out of mischief, kill some of the terrible boredom of your village life

and provide an antidote to your national sports of litigation and cattle-lifting.'

' That would certainly be excellent, Socrates. Much of your programme is hard to popularize, but we shall all be with you here. We all love games, but there is no one to organize them and to see that we play regularly and without quarrelling.'

' You'll soon learn to play them properly. You are all sportsmen in the villages. I have no fears on that score. It's only organization that you need.'

' Well, if everyone knows what is wrong and how to put it right in the villages, what exactly are you doing nowadays, Socrates ? Why should you go on wearying yourself, tramping round our villages ? '

' It doesn't weary me, that I can quickly assure you. It's many years since I made this my hobby, and no one is ever tired of riding his hobby. My job now is this very business of organization that I said you wanted to teach you to play games. Whether it is games or pits or vaccination or sending the girls to school, you villagers must be organized to do it. Nothing can be done well and no improvement can be permanent in your villages, or in any villages in the world, unless there is some organization to carry it on. That is why you see me visiting panchayats and co-operative societies and Boy Scout troops. They are ideal organizations to carry on this work and without all three of them you will never make or keep your villages clean, or do any of the many other things that have to be done to make village India happy and healthy. District community councils are another of my allies. But even organization is not everything. We have to provide the knowledge of what has to be done and the stimulus to act, as well as the machinery for action. Machinery is no good without motive power, and the motive power of village uplift is knowledge. If we can keep on telling everyone what to do, I have not the least doubt that many will soon begin to want to act on what they hear, and then all these organizations that I have mentioned, and many more that you good people will devise for yourselves, will direct and

co-ordinate this desire to act and enable the good work not only to be begun but to be continued and completed, whether there is anyone there to see it done or not.'

' Yes, combination is undoubtedly the sovereign way to carry on village uplift, and the absence of continuity is the worst and most fatal enemy of all our efforts. But how do you propose to keep on telling everyone what you want them to do? A visit to one village to-day and to another next week won't help, and even when you do visit a village you can only talk to a few dozen villagers. Where are you going to get this leaven to stir the whole mass of our villages?'

' That is why you find me in and out of your village schools at all times. They are already beginning to teach this simple programme, and well you know that what is learnt in childhood is never forgotten even in old age.'

' That is very true, Socrates, but you will have to wait a long time before the little boys—'

' And girls, lambardarji—'

' Yes, and girls, Socrates; I am quite ready now to send them along with their little brothers to school.'

' Excellent! Then the leaven will soon begin to work in your homes and villages, as it is the housewife who is responsible for nine-tenths of village life, and once she has learnt the new programme she will put it into operation in her own home and teach it to her children.'

' Yes, but even so you will have to wait a long time for any fruit to your labours.'

' From the school, perhaps yes, but the schoolmaster will be my ally in the village as well as in the school. Besides that we must have newspapers written for the school, the farmer, the housewife, and the village. They will be read by every schoolboy and by every patwari, zaildar, ex-officer, housewife, and—'

' But why should anyone buy and read your newspapers, Socrates?'

' They will contain such news and information about his own district, and his own province and about the markets where his crops go, and they will be so well and so brightly written

that he will be compelled to buy them if he does not want to be out of everything that is going on, and unable even to decide whether to hold his cotton or to sell it. His schoolboy son will want to read the stories, and to hear the interesting things we shall tell him about the world he lives in. No! I have no fears on that score. The sort of newspapers I contemplate will sell themselves.'

'I agree, Socrates, that if the newspapers are well written they will soon be in every home where there is someone who can read well enough to understand them. The fault of most of such newspapers as I have seen is that they are not well enough written to interest us villagers. That is one reason why there is not such keenness on learning to read as there should be, and why so many that do learn forget again as soon as they leave school. But even newspapers won't do it all for you, Socrates. Many villages have no one in them who can read, and they are the ones which need you most.'

'Quite! Newspapers will not do it all. That I admit. But there are many experts on the various things that make up our programme who visit the villages and tell the people what to do.'

'Experts are not enough either, Socrates. There is not one expert for every hundred villages, and they are bound to spend more than half their time travelling over our long and difficult roads to reach us.'

'Schools are not enough, literacy is not general enough for newspapers to provide the knowledge and stimulus necessary for self-improvement, trained workers are too scarce, distances too long and roads too bad! I should indeed be in despair if I had not just seen and tried the best means of all, to reach every village and hamlet in the whole land, and to reach it every day if need be, and to reach every man and woman in it too, whether they can read or not.'

'That must verily be a God-given remedy for all our many troubles, Socrates, if one-quarter of what you say is true.'

'One-quarter true! I have not stated one-quarter of the truth of all the wonders of wireless broadcasting. One man, one woman even, can speak to every man, woman and child

in the Province, and not speak once only, but speak every evening if need be.'

' Impossible, Socrates ! '

' It is God's truth, just as this new discovery is God's most wonderful gift to the villages. Our speaker will sit in a small room at the headquarters of this machine and talk to every village that has paid the small sum necessary to join in. He will tell them about Karachi prices of wheat and cotton, tell them what the weather is likely to be next day, warn them of floods, locusts and epidemics, tell them when the vaccinator will visit each village, tell them the dates of fairs and demonstrations, ploughing matches and cattle-fairs,—'

' How extremely useful, Socrates ! We rarely learn about these things now until it is too late to get any good out of them.'

' And half the money spent on organizing them is consequently wasted. Well, all that will stop when wireless is organized. Not only will you get just the news you want, but you will have short talks about better farming, better seeds, better health, how to keep children fit, how to get rid of malaria,—'

' I am afraid we shan't be able to listen to that sort of stuff for long, Socrates.'

' The more you are interested the longer you will be able to listen. But you need have no fears. We shall only talk for a very few minutes, and then give you a song or a story, or some band music or a dialogue.'

' Splendid, Socrates. We will sit and listen half the night to a song or a ballad.'

' The whole evening will be full of variety, so that everyone will be amused, and those who want to be will also be instructed. The women in particular will be able to learn all about how to cook, and how to make and mend clothes and how to bring up children.'

' But what if a baby cries or a dog barks somewhere, Socrates ? Won't that spoil it for the whole Province ? '

' No,' laughed Socrates ; ' It won't even spoil it for the people listening where the dog barked or the baby cried.

The voice will in every village come out of a trumpet like the one you see on gramophones, and so loud will it be that you can come in your scores with your hookahs after your evening meal and sit round on your charpoys and smoke, and even talk to each other in low undertones without spoiling it for yourselves or other people.'

' Marvellous, Socrates ! It is truly God's special gift to the villages. You now have the means of making your dream of a new village India come true. Every village, once they know about it and have seen and heard this marvellous new machine, will gladly pay the necessary fee—what did you say the fee would be ? '

' You are getting on quickly, lambardarji ! I haven't yet said anything about the fee ! '

' No wonder I'm in a hurry. You've never brought us news like this before, Socrates.'

' Well, at the beginning you will have to pay about one hundred and fifty rupees a year for a loudspeaking receiver to be kept in your village, and maintained in working order, with a programme of, say, two hours' entertainment and instruction, three nights a week.'

' That's only the cost of two chaukidars, Socrates,' almost shouted the lambardar, ' and ten times more useful. Why, the relief from the monotony and dullness of village life will alone be worth twice what you suggest. May we pay this fee in the same way that we pay for chaukidars ? '

' That way or a co-operative wireless society would probably be the easiest method of doing it, I should think. But as soon as the wireless gets popular and plenty of villages take it—big villages will want two or even more than two sets—then the yearly fee will come down to a hundred rupees, I expect.'

' Better still, Socrates. When will this new talking start ? Surely it is you this time, and not we, who are running in a groove and slow to move in a new direction, if you have known about this wonderful thing all these years and have done nothing to make it available for us poor ignorant villagers ! '

' I rather believe you are right there, but anyway it will start now, just as soon as enough of you ask for it and say that you are ready to pay for it. Wireless is like all the other good things we want to see in the villages. As soon as people are ready to pay for them they can have them, and in just as large quantities as they are ready to pay for. That is yet another of the many things I am trying to do, to persuade people to realize that if they like they can really pay for the good things they want. Look at the tremendous amounts they now spend on things that do them no good, and often do them harm ! '

' You are certainly right there, Socrates. We could easily pay for these good things if we made up our minds to. They cost far less than the things we waste our money on now.'

' Well, as soon as you are ready to pay for your own betterment so soon will things begin to mend in your villages. Why, the very act of payment is itself the very finest stimulus to self-improvement. But there is yet another ally that I want besides your money, your responsibility for your own betterment, the wireless, the village newspapers; and all the other things which I have mentioned.'

' What is that, Socrates ? Haven't you collected enough forces yet for your new attack upon the village ? '

' Not yet, lambardarji. I want the law.'

' How do you mean " the law ", Socrates ? '

' Well, in many other countries such simple things as all are agreed must be done by everyone, so as to avoid general loss or inconvenience, are done with the help of the law. In England, for instance, the sale of pure seed for the farmer is ensured by the law. In all countries where the villages are kept clean at all, they are kept clean with the aid of the law.'

' Why not, then, in this country too ? Surely our villages are quite dirty enough to need the help of the law to clean them ? '

' The only reason we cannot yet invoke the aid of the law to clean your villages is that you are not yet ready for such a drastic method. There are not yet enough of you who are

anxious to see the villages clean, and it would take an army of police and officials to enforce a sanitary law. Better no law than a law that is a dead letter or that is tyrannical in its working. But when you all want to have clean villages and you have a panchayat in every village ready and willing to enforce the law there will be no delay in providing a Public Health Act to help you.'

'There can be no better way, Socrates, of preparing us all for the day when we can use the law to put our villages right, than your wireless.'

'Of that I am sure, lambardarji, and meanwhile it is for you and me and every good man and true to do all in their power to carry on this work of making people more healthy and more happy, whether it is in the towns or in the villages.'

'But surely that is only for those to do who are paid to do it, Socrates ?'

'Good heavens, no ! Ten thousand times, no ! That is why everything is stagnation and apathy in town and country alike. It is our duty, our sacred duty, both as citizens and as human beings, whatever our creed, race, or religion, and whatever our profession or calling, whether we are rich or poor, to do all in our power to help our fellow-men to improve the conditions in which they live, to increase health and happiness both in town and village.'

'This is doubtless a very noble idea, Socrates, but don't you think people are too selfish to respond to such an appeal ?'

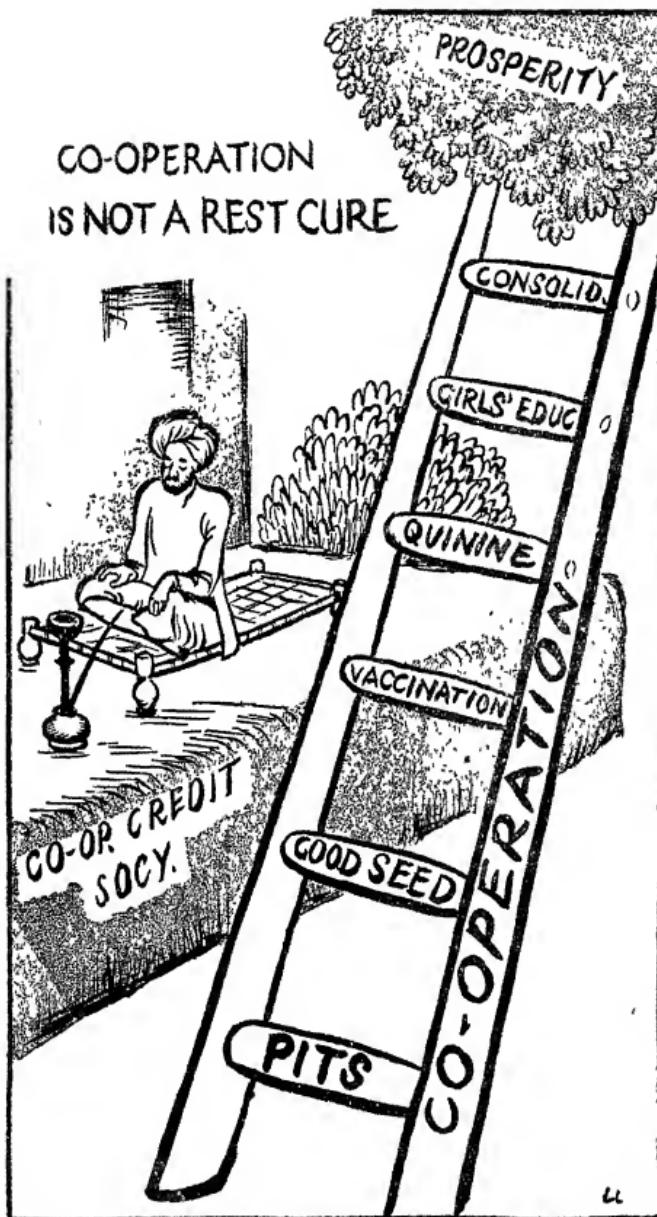
'I might have thought so until recently, but our beloved King-Emperor's son, the Prince of Wales, has recently been going round England making this very appeal.'

'Did it have any effect, Socrates ?'

'I am glad to say that it had and is still having a tremendous effect. People who thought this work was only for paid officials or for padres and such-like folk are now joining in a great effort to make things better in England, and I have not the least doubt that in this country, too, there are plenty of people just waiting for such a call to join together and work for the betterment of their fellow-men.'

'I hope and I believe that you are right, Socrates.'

CO-OPERATION
IS NOT A REST CURE



' Well, lambardarji, these are some of the many things that keep me busy nowadays in your villages. But I must not go on talking for ever ! I see it is getting late, you must be looking for your evening meal and I must be moving on to my distant camp.'

' Good-bye, then, for the present, Socrates, and may I wish you the very best of good fortune in your new enterprise.'

II.

WASTE ! WASTE ! WASTE !

SOCRATES attended a big meeting one day to which the villagers from all round had been summoned, and he heard one of the speakers tell his audience, amid murmurs of assent, how poor the zamindars were. ' You surprise me ', said Socrates when his turn came to speak. ' From what I have seen in my wanderings I should have said that you zamindars were the richest people in the world.'

There were general cries of dissent, while several asked, ' How do you make that out, Socrates ? '

' It is only the rich who can afford to throw away their wealth, and yet, wherever I go, I find you zamindars throwing away your wealth with both hands.'

' We throw nothing away, Socrates.'

' Yes you do, all day and every day.'

' Then tell us what we throw away.'

' First of all you throw away your money. The other day I saw the people all walking in one direction, and so I followed them and found myself at the District Law Courts. The noise was like the buzz of a big fair, and I counted over two hundred people there. They told me that there were often many more than this number at the courts, and that at two other places in

the District there were smaller shows of the same kind going on. Now tell me, how much do you think each person spends each day, on the average, in getting to and from court, and on his legal business, and on everything else connected with his visit to the courts, including of course the loss of his time.'

' Several rupees for certain.'

' Shall we say about ten ? ' asked Socrates.

' Ten would be a very low average.'

' Well, call it ten, and now tell me how many people on the average attend court daily all over the District ? '

' Not less than several hundred, certainly.'

' To be on the safe side shall we say three hundred ? '

' That is a very moderate estimate, Socrates.'

' Then allow two hundred and fifty days in the year, on which the courts are open, and the total thrown away in litigation is— ? '

' Seven and a half lakhs of rupees, Socrates.'

' Correct ! Your arithmetic does you more credit than your methods of business. Seven and a half lakhs a year is more than the total amount of the land revenue that you pay for the whole District. And that is a very low estimate of the cost of litigation, but we must not err on the side of exaggeration. Now for the next account. How much jewellery do you suppose is stored in the people's houses all over the District ? '

' A good deal, Socrates. Most people have a little, at least, and many have a great deal.'

' Shall we allow one hundred rupees worth of jewellery per house ? '

' That would be no exaggeration, anyway.'

' Well, there is one lakh of houses in the villages for our population of five lakhs. That gives us one crore of rupees locked up in jewellery, lying idle, wearing away, or getting lost and stolen. Allow the ladies half a crore—we must not be too strict or no one will listen to us at all.'

' You are very wise, there, Socrates. We shouldn't have a moment's peace at home if we allowed you to lay hands on all their beloved trinkets ! '

'Very well then. Allow half a crore for present necessities. If the other half-crore were in the Central Co-operative Bank it would bring you in at least three lakhs of rupees in interest, half enough to pay all your Land Revenue again, while the capital was helping you to sink wells and improve your farms in every other way.'

'That's correct arithmetic, anyway, Socrates.'

'So much for what you have already got in stock. There is more to come, however. How much are you now spending every year on your precious ornaments?'

'Very little, Socrates, and still less since you started making such a fuss about it. No man dare put on ear-rings when you are in the neighbourhood, for fear you will come along and send for a burkha to put over him and so make a fool of him before the whole village.'

'That's a good thing, but still, I daresay you spend about five rupees per household every year, eh?'

'At least that much.'

'Then that makes another five lakhs for the whole District. Well! I declare!' said Socrates, suddenly stopping and staring very hard at something on the edge of the crowd.

'What on earth is the matter, Socrates?' asked several, following the direction of Socrates' eyes.

'Why, there is a full-grown man still wearing gold ear-rings.'

The man had quickly pulled his puggery over his ears, but he was too late and suddenly found himself the centre of attention of a grinning and tittering crowd.

'I'm a goldsmith, not a zamindar,' he stammered out in his confusion.

'So you use your ears for advertisement purposes, eh?' said Socrates amid laughter. 'Splendid! On that principle our legal friend here ought to hang a Penal Code from one ear and a Procedure Code from the other, while the tahsildar might suspend a Revenue Act from his nose.'

The unfortunate goldsmith had disappeared, however, before the sentence was finished, and when the merriment had subsided Socrates took up the thread of his argument again.

‘And now’, he asked, ‘what about all your social ceremonies?’

‘More money wasted again, I fear, Socrates.’

‘Then you so-called poor people do throw away quite a lot of money in spite of the poverty you talk about so loudly nowadays?’

‘I fear we do, Socrates.’

‘And you’ve shaved your hills clean of trees and grass by the suicidal way you graze goats, camels and cattle on them all the year round, and the ruthless way you hack down the trees. The hills should be a reserve of water, grass and timber. They are now as bare as the palm of your hand. More colossal waste.’

‘There is certainly far less water, grass and wood since the hills were stripped of their covering of vegetation.’

‘And how much land is cut away every year, and how many fields covered with sand, by the rush-off of rain-water from those same bare hills?’

‘That is happening in every village, Socrates.’

‘Now for your manure supply. Instead of doing everything you possibly can to find other kinds of fuel you encourage your women folk to waste their time and your manure by making the cow-dung into cakes for burning. And when you make your ghi, instead of keeping the milk over the fire for only half an hour you keep it simmering all day, quite unnecessarily, as many of you well know, and a needless waste of your best manure.’

‘That is quite true, Socrates.’

‘As for the rest of your possible manure supply, you throw most of your village refuse anywhere and everywhere inside and outside your village, on to the roads, down the sides of the hills, on to any open space you can find. Some of it reaches your fields, but the best of it is washed into the rivers and finally reaches Karachi, where it helps to make their fishes so fat and succulent. That is all very well for the fisher-folk, and I am sure they are very grateful to you for your generosity, but you have lost your manure and with it the possibility of good crops. Now let us try and reckon

exactly how much actual money loss you suffer from this way of dealing with your manure-supply. How much on the average do you suppose is wasted every year by each household ?'

' That would be impossible to calculate, Socrates.'

' Well, take it this way. Would the manure wasted every year be enough to grow three maunds of grain ?'

' Easily, Socrates. Probably double that amount would not be too much to allow.'

' Well, anyway, the loss is not less than three maunds of grain per household. Say eight rupees per house, or eight lakhs a year for the District.'

' You are piling up a big account, Socrates ! '

' I haven't nearly finished yet ! What about the waste of health which this filth lying all about the village causes ? What about the waste of health due to the fever caused by leaving little pools of water about, and by neglecting the use of quinine and mosquito nets ? What about the waste of health from the neglect of vaccination and from your murderous village dais ? '

' That cannot be even guessed, Socrates, but we admit with shame that the loss is very great indeed.'

' And so easily preventible ! That is the appalling part of it all. There is absolutely no reason why the terrible loss and suffering caused by your dirty, idle, cruel and wasteful ways should go on for one more day. But there is still more to say.'

' Go on, Socrates. We may as well hear it all.'

' What about the springs and streams in your hills Many of them run to waste, and if you built bands in the hills you would get still more water.'

' We would use it, Socrates, if we knew how.'

' That I admit,' said Socrates. ' Ignorance is mainly to blame here, but still it is waste. And you waste the sub-soil water in the plains by hot digging wells, where water is near the surface and plentiful. Finally you waste your time. For how many days in the year do you do little or no work, when a good farmer should be busy all day and every day ? There is never a day when a good farmer can truthfully say, " there is

nothing waiting to be done on my farm or at my home to improve them."

'Socrates, you have found us out thoroughly.'

'What about the waste of your labour by the use of out-of-date methods and implements on your farms, by the use of bad seed, bad cattle—'

'Will you never finish your indictment, Socrates?'

'I don't think I ever shall, but I cannot help telling you one or two more ways in which you waste your resources, as they are even more obvious than those I have already told you. What about the light and air which God gives you free, but which you shut out of your houses by refusing to have proper windows and ventilators? And just a last detail to show you how thorough you are in your wastefulness. I mentioned vaccination, but I only told you part of the truth.'

'Well, what is the rest?'

'The taxes which you pay provide the vaccinators, your good wife very often makes a further payment to the vaccinator to spare her dear baby, and then the dear baby catches small-pox. So you first pay for the vaccinator, then bribe him not to do his work, then suffer from small-pox. Triple waste I should call that!'

'I cannot see any answer to that charge, Socrates.'

'Well then, the conclusion of the whole matter is that when you say you are poor, you are undoubtedly correct, but you should always be careful to add that you are poor only because you waste practically every good thing that God in His mercy gives you. And when anyone asks you to subscribe for a village newspaper, a stud bull, a hospital or any other beneficent institution, don't say, "I cannot pay because I am poor and have no money or resources," but "because I prefer to waste them all."'

III

THE LIGHT OF THE HOME

SOCRATES was walking one day from village to village and in each village he visited the school and looked at the children. And in each school he asked the teacher, 'Where are the little girls? I see no little girls here at lessons,' but every time the teacher said, 'There are no girls. The girls do not come to school in this village.'

And in one village Socrates asked the headman, 'Are there no girls in this village?' and the headman laughed and said, 'There are plenty, Socrates, too many in fact, as they are a source of much expense to us, their parents. Look at them over there.' Socrates looked and saw them playing with their little brothers all round the village. But although many of the boys were clean and bright and smart, and had obviously just come from school, the girls were dull and dirty and did not seem to be looked up to as the school boys were.

And Socrates asked the headman, 'Will these girls one day be the mothers of your grandchildren and responsible for their early training and upbringing?' and the lambardar said, 'Yes, Socrates, I suppose so, if God wills. What troubles you, Socrates, that you should bother about them and about the next generation?'

'Well, surely', said Socrates, 'it is the little girls and not the little boys who should be at school, lambardarji, if they are to be responsible for bringing up your grandchildren. The boys, when they grow up, will take their schooling with them to the army, the shop, the office, the fields, and your homes will be as ignorant as ever, but if the mother learns, she will pass it all on to her children.'

And the lambardar laughed heartily at Socrates' funny notions. 'When will you learn our ways, poor Socrates? It is boys who should go to school and not girls.'

And Socrates went into the next school and still found all boys and no girls, and he asked the boys, 'Where are your little sisters?' And the boys were so surprised at

the question that they sat silent, for who bothers about little girls?

And Socrates said, 'Now, boys, I am going to tell you a story and when I have finished you shall tell me the meaning of it all.' And the boys were delighted as they were tired of their dull lessons and they knew that Socrates had children of his own and so he must be able to tell stories.

'Once upon a time,' said Socrates, 'there was a wise and good king and he reigned over a happy and contented people, but although the people had good crops and fields and cattle, they did not know how to build houses and they all lived in caves cut out of the hills. The caves had long passages which ran far into the hills and on both sides of the passages the people had their cells hewn out of the rock, where they lived with their families. But there was no light inside the hills. The king and his noblemen and elders had lamps and so enjoyed light both outside and inside their homes. But the rest of his subjects had no lamps, and so, although the sun shone brightly outside the caves, all was gloom and darkness inside the houses of the common people. Thus the people lived and died in the pitchy dark and the women and little children in particular suffered from the discomforts of this perpetual darkness, as they of course spent much of their time in their homes and did not live all day in the fields as their men folk did.'

'And the king being a good man was troubled at his people's discomfort, and called together his elders and said, "What shall we do to give our people light?" And they took counsel together for a long time and at last the king said, "I will teach my people how to make lamps and how to trim and tend them, so that there shall be brightness in every home in my land." And the elders approved of the king's proposal and said, "We will open schools and send all the boys to learn about the lamps." And the king asked, "Is it the boys that you will send?" And the elders replied with one voice, "Of course we will send the boys! Whoever thought of teaching girls?" And the king said, "So be it. Your wisdom is always greater than mine."

'And the elders went out and told the people what had passed in the council chamber and there was great rejoicing all over the land at the king's goodness and wisdom.

'And the men sent their sons to learn how to make lamps and how to tend them. And soon there was a lad in nearly every home who had learnt the new art. Now there were no matches in the land and every boy when he had made his lamp and learnt to tend it went to the king's palace to kindle it. And having lighted his lamp at the king's palace, he brought it proudly home and for the first time there was a light in every home. And the elders assembled and thanked the king for this great kindness and the land rejoiced and was happy.

'And one day the king went out to visit the homes of his people to see how they enjoyed the new boon he had given them and to hear their thanks and receive their gratitude. And the first house he visited was in darkness and he could see nothing. So the king called out, "Mother, where is your lamp? Has it gone out as quickly as all this?" And the woman of the house answered, "I never had any lamp"; and the king said, "How is that, mother? I thought there was brightness in every home now. Did I not teach your son to make and trim a lamp?"

'And the woman said, "Indeed you did, your majesty. At your bidding I sent my son to learn to make his lamp, and he soon learnt all about it and brought home his lamp all new and bright and for a few days we all rejoiced in its brightness."

"Well, what has happened, mother?" asked the king.

"He has joined the army, your majesty, and taken his lamp with him."

"Why did he do that?" asked the king.

"Your majesty knows full well," said the woman, "that the lamp has to be tended every hour and there is no means of re-lighting it once it goes out, so that he either had to lose his hard-won light or take it with him when he left his home to join the army."

'And the king was silent and went on to the next house and there too he found darkness and the good wife said that her son had gone to the fields and had taken his lamp with him.

And so it was in every house. Some had gone to their shops and some to their offices, but none of the lads had stayed at home, and so there was darkness in every home just as before.

‘And in some houses the women cared nothing, but in some they wept and entreated the king to bring them the light once more, and in some they cursed the king for having once shown them the light and then taken it away again. “I love my children,” shouted one woman, “but how can I bring them up in this darkness?” “Light! Light! Your majesty, give us light!” begged another, “that we may keep our homes bright and look after our husbands and children as we should.”

‘And the king was very angry and returned to his palace and immediately called together his council and said, “You have deceived me”. And they looked at each other in fear and surprise and asked, “How so, your majesty?”

‘And the king said, “Did I not offer to make every home bright?” And they said, “Yes, your majesty, and has not every home a lamp that burns all day?” And the king said, “Indeed it has not. Every house has certainly a lamp, but it is of no use to the house as it is only there at night when every one is asleep. Why did you tell me to teach only the boys, you foolish councillors?”

‘And the councillors were struck dumb as they realized their folly in having trained only the boys to trim the lamps, so that the lamps had to go with the boys to their business and pleasure when they grew up instead of staying to light the house at all times.

‘And the king said, “Up, all of you, and fetch the girls to learn how to trim the lamps. A girl never leaves her home except to make another home. So shall the houses of my people be ever bright.”

‘And the elders went to the people and said it was the king’s command that the girls too should learn to tend the lamps, and every man should send his daughter to be trained. And the men folk hesitated and said, “Why this bother? Are we not quite well off as we are?” But the women said to their daughters, “Never mind your father! Go quick and learn. The home is ours; let us brighten it by all means in our

power ; so shall our husbands be happy and comfortable and our children healthy and strong."

' And the little girls flocked to the king's palace to learn to trim the lamps, and they learnt far quicker than the boys did, for their hearts were in their work and they longed to be able to brighten their gloomy homes. And they told all that they learnt to their mothers so that they too in time were able to help to trim the lamps.

" Now will our homes be always bright ! " said they all. And so it came to pass. In every home was a lamp and every house was bright now that the little girls had learnt to tend the lamps.

' And there was great rejoicing and happiness all over the land and the people lived in great peace and health and prosperity and loved their good wise king more than ever.'

' Now then, boys,' said Socrates, ' What is the meaning of my story ? ' But the boys were dumb.

' Come, come,' said Socrates, ' it's not very hard.'

' We must not put out our lamps at night,' said a small boy.

No, that won't do,' said Socrates.

' We ought to stay at home always and not go to the shops and fields.'

' No ; hardly that. Try again.'

But none could guess. ' Well, masterji, you have a try,' said Socrates.

' I think I can see it, Socrates,' said the schoolmaster. ' Education is light, and as the home centres round the mother, we must send our little girls to school, so that the mother may become the true light of the home, and we may have happy homes, healthy children and enlightened mothers.'

' That's right, masterji. Now explain it all carefully to these boys and send them home to tell their parents. In a week's time you'll have a dozen girls in here reading with their brothers.'

THE MOTHER MAKES THE HOME -



SO SEND YOUR GIRLS TO SCHOOL

IV

COMBINE AND PROSPER

SOCRATES was coming down a hill with several companions and had just rounded a corner when they found the road in front of them almost blocked with a big boulder that had rolled down from the hillside above and lodged on the road.

‘How long has this rock been here?’ asked Socrates.

‘Several weeks, to my own knowledge,’ said the lambardar. ‘It was here when I came this way last month, and I don’t know for how long before then.’

‘Didn’t you tell the District Board or whoever is responsible for the upkeep of the road?’

‘No, I didn’t. Why should I?’

‘Why shouldn’t I, is the proper question, not why should I, if you ever want to have a comfortable country to live in without paying many more taxes than you do now. It’s your money that keeps these roads in order and you who use them, so it’s only the commonest of common sense to do all you can to make the taxes you pay go as far as they possibly can. But the immediate problem before us is how to get this great boulder off the road.’

‘Leave it, Socrates. Why should we bother with it?’

‘Of course we must bother with it. We are not in a violent hurry, we are citizens of this district, and therefore bound to help in every way we can. Besides, I am a “Scout” and have to do at least one good turn every day. Here’s a splendid chance to get to-day’s good deed done before we go any further.’

‘If you must, then,’ said the lambardar with a shrug, and they all set to work to push and shove this way and that at the great rock that blocked the road. An old shikari who was with them made a tremendous noise, and all his strength seemed to go into his grunts and puffs.

Nothing, however, would make the rock move. ‘Leave it,’ said the lambardar. ‘We have done our best, and it’s no fault of ours that we cannot clear the road.’

' Muscle won't move it, certainly. Let's see what brains will do,' and Socrates took a piece of hard rock and started chipping at the softer parts of the great boulder. The shikari soon proved himself to be the best workman of the lot, and after a bit here and a bit there had been broken off, Socrates called for one more heave, all together, and over the edge crashed the mighty boulder, and they watched it go bounding down the steep hillside till, with one last leap, it struck a jutting rock and broke into a thousand pieces.

' That's one good thing done, at any rate,' said Socrates, as they resumed their journey down the hill. Arrived at the village, Socrates bade his companions farewell, and joined a party of villagers and was soon lost in a discussion of the difficulties of village life nowadays. From where they sat, just outside the village, they overlooked a ravine, and at the bottom of this ravine was a well from which women were laboriously drawing water with ropes and buckets.

' Yes, everything is very difficult these hard times,' said several.

' Your difficulties,' said Socrates, as he watched the work at the well, ' are as the games of children compared with the terrible trials of your women folk.'

' Why so, Socrates ? ' questioned someone. ' We men do all the hard work.'

' Oh, do you ? ' asked Socrates. ' How many of your women could spare the time to come and sit here as you are sitting, or to go and watch pirkaudi or to run a criminal or a civil case in the District Courts ? You work hard, indeed ! I wish to God you men would indeed work hard. You'd be better off and would not quarrel so much. Now look at that well. Just because you men are too thoughtless or too selfish to put a little hand-pump on it, all the women, young and old, pregnant women, young mothers, all alike, have to slave away with buckets and ropes to get their water. A little inattention or the slip of a foot—and in they fall, and have to be rescued with possibly a strained back or a shock that leads to an abortion. No, indeed ! Don't imagine it is you men that are the sufferers in village life. Those women

would love a bath, but as long as we sit here they are too modest to strip their clothes off at the well and will have to carry back extra water up the hill to the village, and make a mess of their back-yards at home splashing water about, just because you men are too thoughtless and too idle to put up washing places for the women on your wells.'

'That's only a little thing, Socrates.'

'All life is made up of little things,' said Socrates. 'If only you would look after some of these little things you'd find it would make a vast difference to the health and comfort and happiness of village life.'

'But how are we to set about them, Socrates?'

'The way you ought to set about every difficulty in village life,' said Socrates.

'How is that?'

'CO-OPERATION,' said Socrates.

'How will co-operation help us?' asked several.

'Well, hand me that rope,' said Socrates to a man who was fingering a coil of new rope he had just made.

'That looks a strong rope,' said Socrates.

'It certainly is,' said the man, not unnaturally rather proud of his handiwork. 'If half of us here pulled one end and half the other we shouldn't even stretch it.'

'Really? Well, anyway, I'll break it for you,' said Socrates.

'No, you can't,' said the man.

'Well, let me have a try.'

'Willingly,' said the man. 'You can go on trying till to-morrow if you like.'

Socrates took the rope and twisted it backwards so as to open the threads and then proceeded to break thread by thread with his fingers.

'That's not fair,' said the man, as he snatched his rope back. The others laughed at the easy way the rope-maker had been caught.

'That's what I mean by co-operation,' said Socrates.

'But here's someone who can tell you exactly what co-operation means,' added Socrates, as he looked up and caught sight of the old shikari, who had finished his meal and

come along to join the party above the ravine. 'Just you tell them, shikariji, all about the big boulder on the road.'

And so the shikari did, and omitted no detail of his own prowess.

'That is co-operation,' said Socrates, bringing the tale to an end. 'As long as the rock held together it was our master. As soon as the rock began to break up we were its master. While we worked each his own way we could do nothing. When we worked together and used our brains to help us we were able to clear the road. As long as you remain disunited, working alone or quarrelling with each other and stopping each other from making progress or doing any good work, you are like the rock after we began to break it up, or like the threads of that rope, which even a child can break. Combine and you are irresistible, like the rock before it began to crumble, like us when we worked together, like that rope when it is twisted together. Co-operation is the only remedy for all your troubles. If only you people will join together you can do anything you like. By co-operation you can clean your village, learn better farming, remove bad customs, educate your girls, and get on with all the rest of the uplift programme.'

'How will co-operation help in all these ways?' asked someone.

'You can have co-operative schools, co-operative better-living societies, co-operative banks, co-operative—'

'That won't help me,' said a very sad and worried-looking man.

'What is your particular difficulty?' asked Socrates.

'My wife has just died of some childbirth complaint, leaving me a month-old baby to look after.'

'Could you get no help from the hospital?'

'Hospital! hospital!' shouted the man. 'There's no hospital for women within thirty miles of this village.'

'But what's that building over there, then? I thought that was a hospital.'

'That's a hospital for cattle. There are several of them about, but none for women,' and the man laughed sarcastically.

‘ If it’s a hospital for women that you need, then I think co-operation would help you a very great deal,’ said Socrates

‘ How so ? ’ asked several, incredulously.

‘ Well, why not have a co-operative women’s hospital ? ’

‘ How can we do that ? The District Board provides for our hospitals.’

‘ Well, you know the District Board has spent all its money on village schools and can’t open any more hospitals unless you will pay more taxes. Will you do that, or would you prefer to close your schools ? ’

‘ We would rather do neither,’ said several.

‘ Very well, then the District Board can’t give you a women’s hospital.’

‘ No, it doesn’t look like it.’

‘ Well, which would you rather do, pay five rupees once a year and have a lady doctor available for every day in the year, or keep your five rupees and see your women suffer and die for want of attention at critical times, until finally the District Board in despair puts a tax on you and drags five rupees out of you while you grumble and say you’re over-taxed ? ’

‘ If you put it that way, I am certain that we would rather pay five rupees and have a doctor ready to help our women and children all the year round, but we never thought of doing anything ourselves about it.’

‘ Well, do think about it. Start a co-operative women’s hospital with shareholders and directors and everything else just like the credit society you already have in the village. You will then cheerfully pay your five rupees and find yourselves shareholders, able to point proudly to your own women’s hospital. Is not that better than sitting here whining like a beggar because no one will produce a lady doctor for you ? ’

‘ That does sound a more honourable course for a self-respecting race of land-owning farmers like us.’

‘ Then get on with it and remember that the only sure remedy for all the evils and troubles of village life is CO-OPERATION.’

PRACTISE WHAT YOU PREACH

'WHAT a splendid show!' said Socrates, as he looked at the Boy Scouts' troop room. 'Mottoes all over the walls, and just the right ones, too, about cleanliness and pits and thrift and all the other things I am so busy teaching in the villages. This is grand, and I'm sure your village must be so "uplifted" that it is hardly recognizable for the same place it was before your troop was started.'

'I'm glad you're so pleased, Socrates, but somehow or other the village seems to be much the same as ever it was,' said the patrol leader, rather shamefacedly.

'Oh, how's that, I wonder?' asked Socrates. 'Surely they can't help seeing how much better you all are for doing all the sensible things you tell them to do.'

'They take no notice of what we tell them, Socrates. It seems to go in at one ear and come out at the other.'

'Well, anyway, let's hear just how you tell them,' said Socrates.

Everyone seemed very relieved when Socrates suggested this and a scout darted forward at once and started up a splendid song. His voice was good and the tune was good.

'Well done,' exclaimed Socrates when he had heard a couple of verses. 'Now for another.' And another boy with an equally good voice sang another good song. 'Well done again,' said Socrates, 'and what were those two lovely songs about?'

'The first was about thrift—the ninth law, you know, Socrates—and the second was about personal cleanliness—tenth law, of course.'

'You know the law all right, I see,' said Socrates, 'but there's one little thing I don't quite understand.'

'What's that?' asked several bright young scouts at once, hoping to be able to put old Socrates right in one thing at any rate.

‘ Well, it’s like this. The first singer had gold ear-rings on and the second had dirty finger-nails. That’s hardly thrift and cleanliness, is it ? ’

‘ I didn’t notice the finger-nails, Socrates,’ said the scout-master, coming up, ‘ but the first boy was certainly wearing ear-rings. That’s the custom round here.’

‘ But if I came in drunk, and sang a song about temperance would you at once forswear strong drink ? ’

‘ No, certainly not. We should tell you to go away and practise temperance yourself first, before coming and telling us to be sober.’

‘ Exactly,’ said Socrates, ‘ and don’t you think that your songs about thrift and all these other things will have far more effect on the villagers when you practise yourselves the things which you tell other people to do ? ’

‘ Yes, I suppose so, Socrates, but we hadn’t thought of that before.’

‘ Well, start now, and make it an absolute rule to preach nothing in the village that every teacher and boy in your school and in your troop is not regularly practising themselves. The villagers are not fools. They will follow your advice fast enough when they see you doing yourselves just what you are telling them to do. But till you practise what you preach, this villager will take no more notice of your “ uplift ” songs than the donkey on the common, and I don’t blame him either ! ’

‘ Thank you, Socrates, we’ll make a start with that rule at once.’

‘ And look here,’ said Socrates, ‘ you’ve got notices up there about pits and latrines, I suppose ? ’

‘ Yes, rather, and we have songs about them too.’

‘ And yet your school has no pit for its rubbish, and you throw everything over the compound wall, so that the school may be known a hundred yards away by the litter that is blown about.’

‘ That’s so, I’m afraid, Socrates.’

‘ And you have no pit-latrine and are teaching your boys to follow the same dirty habits that you are preaching to the villagers to give up.’

'Quite true, Socrates, I'm sorry to say.'

'Then stop preaching at once and pull those posters down; until you have a pit-latrine for the school, and not only have a pit-latrine, but are actually throwing all your rubbish into it; and it is being regularly used by every boy and teacher.'

VI

A LUCKY VILLAGE

SOCRATES walked round the village and then joined the men, who were standing about or sitting and smoking before they started for their fields. He seemed very pleased, and after they had greeted each other Socrates said, 'I congratulate you, zamindars. I've found a perfect village. You must be very happy here!'

The villagers were very pleased at receiving such a rare compliment from such a keen critic and said, 'Thank you, Socrates. It is very pleasant to be congratulated by one who is so unused to uttering praise. Our many labours have indeed been rewarded when Socrates himself is pleased.'

Socrates was, however, smiling in such a suspicious-looking manner that one of the younger men among the villagers, a havildar on leave, ventured to ask him what exactly was the particular feature of this village for which he had such unstinted praise.

'Well,' said Socrates, 'everything is so conveniently situated in this village. You can do all your domestic business without moving more than a few yards from your doors.'

'Yes,' said another man, without waiting to hear any more from Socrates. 'Our village is certainly comfortable. We have no complaints about the internal arrangements.'

'Wait a minute,' said the havildar, 'before you say too much. Let Socrates finish what he has to say first. Well,

Socrates,' he continued, 'I am anxiously waiting to hear why you have praised us.'

' Well, it's like this,' said Socrates. ' A road runs along the edge of the village. On one side of the road are houses and immediately beyond the road is a pond, and the water from the road drains into the pond. As I came along the road, my eyes and my nose immediately told me that the road is used daily as a latrine. A few yards further on I see that the bank of the pond is used as a rubbish pit and there is a heap of rubbish lying there now, half in the pond and half on the road. Still a few yards further on I found a gentleman bathing, while on the opposite bank a dhobi was washing clothes. Your village economy is complete. Latrine, urinal, rubbish pit, bathing place, laundry, and presumably drinking place for man and beast, all happily mixed up together. You are indeed lucky villagers ! '

' Why lucky ? ' asked the inquisitive havildar, while the rest of the villagers were swallowing the hard words which Socrates had just used.

' Lucky that you are not all dead from foul diseases, and lucky that you have any harvest at all, when the whole of your manure supply is devoted to paving your streets and to improving your pond water. But I have wasted quite a lot of your valuable time talking here, and I see that you are just off to sow your wheat. Let me make up for my thoughtlessness by helping you.' And as he said it, Socrates took his bag of grain from a zamindar before he could object.

' Don't bother, Socrates. There is plenty of time left for sowing,' said the zamindar, trying to recover his bag.

' It is no bother,' replied Socrates, sticking firmly to the bag. ' It's a most pleasant change for me to work on the land instead of talking and writing all day. Now where are you going to sow your wheat ? '

' In the highly manured land near the village, of course,' said several, and away went Socrates, scattering his seed all down the village street.

' Hi, hi ! Stop, Socrates, stop ! Don't waste my seed like that,' shouted the owner of the bag, rushing after the sage.

THE BEST MANURED LAND
IN THE VILLAGE



'I'm so sorry,' said Socrates, 'but you said just now that wheat wanted highly manured land, and isn't your village street the best manured land in the world?'

VII

GOD'S ARMY

SOCRATES was riding through the villages near Jhelum, when he saw vast bodies of young locusts marching steadily towards Jhelum, and eating every leaf and blade of grass as they went.

'How about it, chaudhriji?' asked Socrates of the old soldier he met by the wayside mosque. 'Why haven't you killed all these accursed pests?'

'We have killed myriads, Socrates, but still they come.'

'Where do they come from?' asked Socrates.

'God knows,' said the chaudhri.

'They must come from somewhere: they don't drop from the sky,' said Socrates.

'No, they don't do that,' agreed the villager.

'Their eggs must have been laid somewhere, I suppose, and you villagers must have failed to dig them out and burn them.'

'We dug out millions of eggs, and got two annas a seer for them.'

'You must have left millions too,' said Socrates.

'I suppose we did, but after all you can't expect chokras to be very thorough in their work. They collect a few eggs, and then go off to play, and the work is forgotten.'

'So you grown men didn't think it worth while digging out locusts' eggs?'

'No, that was chokras' work, of course.'

'Chokras' work indeed! The same old story, women's work, chokras' work, Government's work, any excuse to save the lordly zamindar from doing a job of work.'

‘ You mistake us, Socrates, we are very hard-working folk.’

‘ Very well then, what were you doing while the chokras forgot to dig all the eggs out ? Have you a well, which you were busy working ? ’

‘ No, I have no well.’

‘ Then, perhaps you were busy—doing—doing— ? Well, what were you doing ? If you weren’t working a well, there was nothing much else you could be doing ’

‘ We have to feed the cattle.’

‘ An hour a day, let us say.’

‘ Quite that.’

‘ Well, what were you doing for the rest of the time ? ’

‘ Some of us had to go to Jhelum, of course.’

‘ Litigation, eh ? ’

‘ Yes, probably.’

‘ Very hard work that, and most necessary ! We mustn’t interfere with your national sport ! And what were the rest of you doing ? ’

‘ I don’t know, Socrates.

‘ I do.’

‘ What then ? ’

‘ Smoking or quarrelling ! ’

‘ Now, look here, Socrates, it’s all very well for you to laugh at us, but just listen to me for a moment,’ and the old man came near to Socrates’ horse and put his hand on Socrates’ knee.

‘ Sahib,’ he said very impressively, ‘ this is God’s army, and who can fight against it ? ’

‘ God’s army indeed ! ’ shouted Socrates. ‘ Don’t tell me nonsense like that ; it’s Satan’s army, bred and recruited by the laziness of you zamindars. Now tell me plainly, chaudhri, are these locusts more difficult to defeat than the Germans were ? ’

‘ God forbid, Socrates ; you evidently weren’t there, or you wouldn’t say that.’

‘ As a matter of fact I was there for a bit, but never mind that. It took you four years and much money and many lives to defeat the Germans, and yet you never gave in and

it was "God's army" and therefore could not be defeated.'

'We often thought they were well-nigh impossible to defeat.'

'And yet you never thought for a moment it was "God's army"! Nor are the locusts God's army. By the will of God they have come to test you, to see if you can get up early and work hard, and all work together without arguing and quarrelling. And now in the first battle you lose heart and say it's God's army fighting against you. Fight, man, fight! Kill locusts by day and by night. Kill them early and late! Turn out all your men, women and children and kill, kill, kill. It may take one year, it may take four years, but win you must if you don't lose heart, and win you must if you don't want to starve. Yes, and if you do lose the great war against the locusts, your epitaph will be :

HERE LIES THE PUNJAB ZAMINDAR WHO
AFTER HELPING TO WIN THE GREAT WAR
WAS DEFEATED BY AN INSECT

And the whole world will laugh at you.'

VIII

THE ONLY TEACHER

'YOU are for ever telling us to learn thrifty ways, Socrates, but it is mighty hard.'

'Well I know it, lambardarji. This depression has come on us suddenly and thrift cannot be learnt in a minute.'

'Had we seen it coming several years ago, Socrates, and had we listened more carefully to what you were teaching us then, we might have put by enough money in the good times—'

'You would now be paying your land revenue and water rates with the interest on your savings if you had started

putting money away when cotton sold for twenty rupees a maund.'

'Don't talk about it, Socrates. Our folly has returned upon us with a vengeance.'

'Well, learn thrift now.'

'Who is to teach us, Socrates?'

'Why, your wives of course. The "gharwali", the keeper of the home, is the person above all others who is interested in keeping the home together; she is the one to teach you thrift.'

'That may be so in other countries, Socrates, but it is not so in ours. Our wives are even more wasteful than we are.'

'Impossible,' said Socrates.

'It is perfectly true, Socrates. It is they who deck themselves and their children with trinkets. It is they who insist on expensive weddings. It is they who often urge us to waste our money on litigation. No, our women will never teach us thrift, Socrates.'

'Then there is small hope for you, if both you and your wives are thriftless. Our womenfolk should be the guardians of our homes. They should stand for peace and thrift; peace, because if the country is disturbed, they may lose their husbands, their homes and little ones may be in danger, and they may be unable to provide them with food; thrift, because they have a family to feed. Their instinct should be to lay by in case hard times come, as their first thought is always for the feeding and clothing of their families. If your wives, therefore, cannot teach you thrift and cannot keep you from quarrelling and disorder, nothing else will.'

'But how can they teach us what they don't know themselves?'

'Exactly so. As long as you treat them as inferiors and unfit to be educated, so long will you remain wasteful, thriftless, uncomfortable, unhappy, unhealthy, quarrelsome, undisciplined and disorderly.'

'Those days have gone, Socrates. We don't think they are inferior nowadays.'

'But you treat them as if they were.'

‘ Why do you say that ? ’

‘ Wherever I go, I see boys in clean clothes at school and girls playing among the village muck-heaps.’

‘ But the boys who go to school are no more thrifty than those who don’t go there.’

‘ Exactly so. It is not the boys’ job. The guardianship of the home is the woman’s job. Isn’t the house-wife called “ gharwali ”, the highest compliment that any woman can be paid ? Gharwali, the guardian angel of the home. She is the one who must be trained if you ever want to learn thrift and if you ever want to have peaceful, happy, healthy homes. Do you think that when your wife has had any education she will let you waste your money on litigation, drink and ceremonies ? Do you think she will clamour for jewellery and bore holes in her children’s ears ? Do you think she will hide her children from the vaccinator ? Do you think she will allow you to keep the village in the filthy state you do now, once she learns that dirt brings disease ? ’

‘ You must be right, Socrates. Those of us who went to France told us how thrifty the women were and how well they kept their homes and children.’

‘ Well, it must be the same with you, if ever you want to see better times.’

‘ But their womenfolk there commanded more respect than ours do here.’

‘ Of course they did, because they were just as well educated and trained as their husbands. No one respects ignorant people nowadays.’

‘ That is certainly so, Socrates.’

‘ There you are, then. Send the girls to school so that by educating themselves they may acquire self-respect and be able to earn the respect of their husbands when they marry. They will then wield the influence they should in your homes and take their true place as the guardians of your home and purse.’

‘ I believe you are right, Socrates. At present our women folk help us to waste both our health and our wealth. Once our girls are educated they will learn how to run a home

properly, and how to save our money and how to keep their families in health and happiness.'

'I am certain I am right,' said Socrates. 'I know that from looking at my own children. They have no holes bored in their ears. They are vaccinated and re-vaccinated, however; they sleep in mosquito-nets; they are dosed with quinine and are well acquainted with soap. I suppose you would call me a heartless father and my wife an unnatural mother.'

'We daren't say that about you, Socrates; we have seen your lovely children—but they are the children of a rich man.'

'A rich man, indeed! How do you make that out, lambardarji? Soap is cheap, and their clothes are all made for them by their mother. Your children's clothes are made by the village darzi, I believe?'

'Yes, that is so, Socrates.'

'Then it is your children who are rich men's children, with their hundred rupees' worth of ornaments and clothes made by the darzi. Yours are hundred rupee children, mine are four rupee children: three rupees for mosquito nets, eight annas for soap, eight annas for quinine, and clothes all made at home. But you should see how bright and fit they are, lambardarji, and how they play and run, and how quick they are at lessons.'

'Yes, that I know, Socrates.'

'It's not a question of wealth, lambardarji, it's a question of their mother's knowledge and education. It's too late for you, but if you want your grandchildren to be better than you are, you must send your little girls to school, so that they may learn all these things for the time when they will have children of their own. Whenever I see dirty children loaded with trinkets I know that their mothers never went to school, and their fathers are the slaves of debt and custom, and waste their money on all the old follies and ceremonies, and refuse to learn how to save their wealth and their children's health.'

IX

BEGGARS ALL

' WHERE were you when I last visited the village ? ' asked Socrates of the lambardar. ' You are usually here to meet me and tell me all the news.'

' I had fever that day,' said the lambardar.

' How did you manage to get fever ? Don't you take quinine ? '

' No. I have no quinine.'

' Why have you no quinine ? You used to take it last year.'

' Oh, yes. I had some last year, but I have none this year.'

' How is that ? ' asked Socrates. ' You know how useful it is. Could you not buy any ? Was there none to be had at the shop ? '

' I don't know. I never tried to buy any.'

' Then how do you expect to get any, if you don't buy it ? Don't you buy salt, pepper and other spices for your food when you run short ? '

' Yes, I always buy them,' said the lambardar.

' They why do you not buy quinine ? It is surely more useful than any spices at this time of year ? Where did you get your quinine last year ? '

' It was brought me by the zaildar.'

' That's very kind of him. Did you not pay him the cost ? '

' Oh, no, he got it free from the District Board.'

' Evidently he was bringing you sample pills ! '

' I don't know whether they were sample pills or what they were, but anyway I found them very useful for fever.'

' Then why did you not buy your own supply this year ? '

' Buy ! buy ! Why should I buy ? Why should I not get it free ? '

' Why should you not get your salt and spices free from the District Board, in the same way ? '

' I am not a beggar, Socrates, that I should get my food free from the District Board.'

'That's just what you are when you want quinine free. You admit that quinine is more important than spices and yet you want to beg it from the District Board; and you are a lambardar too! Have you no sense of honour? You a lambardar and ex-soldier and a man of means begging from the District Board! Wâh, Wâh!'

'I am sorry,' said the lambardar, 'I did not look at it in that light. I thought that as long as there was free stuff to be had there was no need for me to think about buying it.'

'And because you cannot get it free,' said Socrates, 'you are prepared to be ill rather than buy it?'

'Never again,' said the lambardar. 'I will buy my own quinine in future.'

'Do you ever visit the hospital?' asked Socrates.

'Oh, yes,' answered the lambardar. 'I often go to the hospital. It is only two miles off.'

'How much do you pay for your medicines and for the privilege of having a doctor almost at your door?'

'Nothing,' said the lambardar. 'The District Board provides them free, both doctors and medicines.'

'The District Board may provide them free,' said Socrates, 'but it only does so because it trusts to your honour that if you can afford to, you will contribute to the hospital, so that the poor may be treated free. And it is because those of you who can pay, refuse to pay, that the District Board is unable to open any more hospitals. You fortunate villagers near whose homes the hospitals have been opened, by refusing to pay what you can for medical aid and medicines, have exhausted all the money which the District Board can afford to give for hospitals, and no more hospitals can be opened. And, what's worse, no women doctors can be employed. All because you and others like you are beggars and are ready to take charity from the District Board.'

'You have caught me again. It never occurred to me and it never occurred to anyone else, I think, that by accepting free medicines and medical aid we were reducing ourselves to the level of beggars. We thought that as long as we could get it free it was highly creditable to do so, and we were proud of

ourselves because we were getting free medical aid. You turn our pride into ashes when you tell us that free medical aid is the sign of a beggar.'

'But it's perfectly true,' said Socrates. 'As long as you accept free medical aid you are a beggar, and what's more you are depriving your womenfolk of the possibility of having trained dais or female doctors and you are depriving other villages of the possibility of any hospital at all. The principle should be that those who can pay shall pay and medicines shall only be free for those who cannot possibly pay. Instead of it being a matter of pride that you are getting free medicines and free doctors, it should be a matter of pride that you are paying your way, just as it is a matter of pride with you that you pay land revenue and do not go and beg for it to be remitted.'

'I will try and think of it that way in future,' said the lambardar, 'and try and get other people in my village to do the same.'

'Once you do that,' said Socrates, 'the District Board will be able to have hospitals every few miles, with male and female doctors and nurse-dais and everything complete, so that your women and children will no longer be put to unnecessary suffering and you will not lose wives and babies for no other reason than the absence of a trained woman at a critical time.'

'That will be indeed splendid,' said the lambardar, 'when there is help within the reach both of our women as well as of our men.'

'But you'll never get it,' said Socrates, 'until you recognize that a man of honour pays whenever he can and hates to beg for his quinine or his doctor or his medicine. You are ready to pour out money for all sorts of shows when you have a marriage or any other ceremony in the family, and yet you don't think of giving a few rupees to the local hospital in honour of the event. You're ready to waste any amount of money when you have a child born, and yet you only pay a rupee to the dai, and if it is a girl you only pay eight annas, and the dai, being untrained, puts the life of both your wife

and your baby in grave jeopardy. If you will pay even five rupees with every baby that is born, you will soon have first-class trained dais in every village. You are ready to waste money on anything except what is useful and when anything useful is concerned, you are prepared to beg. You swallow your honour and beg for your education, beg for your stud-bulls, beg for your quinine, beg for your doctors, and beg for your medicines.

'It is a point of honour with the society to which I belong to pay for our children's education, and we should think that our honour was gone if we sent our children free to Government schools. We sacrifice our comfort and our capital in putting our children into expensive schools. We may not be altogether right in our notions, but anyway, as a result of them, we get the best education in the world. If you want good things you must pay for them. As long as you are content to waste your money on the unnecessary things and refuse to pay for the useful things you will never be properly provided, and you will be for ever poor.'

DO YOUR OWN WORK

SOCRATES was sitting in the village trying to work out the profits which were made by keeping cattle. 'In England', he said, 'they reckon that a good cow is worth £25 net profit every year.'

'In our part of the country', said the villagers, 'twenty-five rupees would probably be a nearer estimate of the annual profits of a fairly good cow.'

'Well, I suppose you join together to buy your cotton-cake in large quantities and then distribute it amongst yourselves,' asked Socrates, 'in order to get a better price?'

'Oh, no, we each buy from the shopkeeper and he brings the stuff from the market six miles away and retails it to us.'

'So that to save yourselves the trouble of joining together and buying cattle food co-operatively you keep a shopkeeper in luxury up here ?'

'That is so,' said the people. 'We buy everything from him and sell everything to him.'

'So that the labour of producing the ghi and grain is yours and the profits of the industry go to the shopkeeper.'

'That is about it,' said the villagers.

'But I suppose', said Socrates, 'that at least you make your own oil cake by squeezing the oil out of the mustard seed which you grow in your fields ?'

'Oh, no,' said the villagers, 'the teli does that.'

'Then I suppose the lohar and the khâti do all your iron work and wood work ?'

'Yes, that is so.'

'And the chumar makes your shoes and so on and so on ?'

'Yes, that is all true,' said the villagers.

'In fact you zamindars are a body of slaves working all the year round in order to find business and profit for a shopkeeper or two, a teli or two, and a host of other people who live by doing work which you are too idle or too stupid or too disorganized to do for yourselves ?'

'Yes, if you look at it that way, I suppose you are quite correct,' said a villager.

'But you are always telling me you are poor,' said Socrates

'We are certainly that.'

'But poor people can't afford to keep swarms of dependents.'

'We have always had these people to do the various kinds of work there are in the village.'

'A relic of those good old days,' said Socrates, 'which I've told you fifty times are gone for ever.'

'You've certainly told us that often enough,' said the villagers.

'But you don't seem yet to have understood it,' said Socrates. 'Why, every day of the week your sons are coming to me about jobs and wanting to be orderlies or to be found other billets, in which there is very little work to do and no

knowledge or skill or experience is required—in fact your sons' sole desire is to be ornamental and they expect me to arrange for them.'

'Yes, that is so,' said the villagers. 'There is not enough work for them in the village, so that we have to send them out for service of various kinds, and as they have not learnt to use their hands and are uneducated, we have to look for ornamental jobs for them.'

'That way lies starvation,' said Socrates. 'If a zamindar has four sons and has only work for one on his land, then one son had better squeeze the oil out of the mustard for the rest of the village and make a living that way, and when there is no mustard to squeeze out he must do some other job. Another son must learn to work in wood or iron and another son must learn to work in leather, and so on. And another son must keep a store—a co-operative store, that is to say, formed by the zamindars all joining together and ordering all their supplies jointly and marketing all their produce jointly. It's absurd, you poor people attempting to support hosts of shopkeepers and menials to do your work for you while your own sons are wandering from place to place in search of work—no, not of work, but of idlers' jobs.'

'There is a lot in what you say, Socrates. You have told us again and again that since the war the whole world is changed, and that the struggle for existence is going to get keener and keener every year, but it is one thing to say that our sons must work and it is quite another to make them do so until they are really driven to it by hunger.'

'Don't wait for that terrible day,' said Socrates, 'as hunger brings crime and discontent and a lot of other nasty things before it teaches hard work. Better begin now and rub it into your children every day and all day that the remedy for the evil days you see coming is WORK and again WORK, that no work is dishonourable and only idleness is dishonourable. And, while you are teaching your sons to work, teach yourselves to combine, so that you may do for yourselves, co-operatively, what you now support hosts of people to do for you, to your own great loss and their great

profit and comfort. Work and co-operation are the only ways of avoiding the hard times that are soon to come for all those who won't work and won't combine.'

XI

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH OUR BOYS?

'WHERE are you all going?' asked Socrates of a party of ex-officers and zamindars that he met in the road near the Company Bagh.

'We are off to see the District Officer.'

'What about?'

'He has advertised in his weekly newspaper, the *Nai Zindgi*,¹ that applications are invited for the post of Naib Tahsildar. The lads must be F.A. or B.A., and as our boy is F.A. and the son of an ex-officer zamindar, we are bound to get him this appointment.'

'Yes, but what if B.A.'s apply, also sons of ex-officer zamindars? And what about the boy himself? Surely the District Officer must look at the lads themselves and ask them questions and see which is the best on his own merits? Look here, who are these coming along? Good morning to you, rajas or chaudhris, whichever you are: have you got a B.A. for the District Officer?'

'Yes, we have,' said the other party, as it halted for a talk, 'and his father is an ex-soldier zamindar.'

'There! I told you so. The villages swarm with B.A. and F.A. sons of ex-soldier zamindars. Now what do you suppose the poor District Officer will do with them all? Twenty-five or thirty applications, and two nominations from here, of which one will be accepted if he is lucky. And so on every year. For every hundred F.A.'s and B.A.'s one or two jobs at the most.'

¹ *New Life* published at Jhelum.

‘ Those that are lucky will succeed, the rest must wait,’ said the ex-officer.

‘ Wait for what ? ’ asked Socrates.

‘ Another chance,’ said the ex-officer.

‘ But next year there’ll be a still bigger crop of F.A.’s and B.A.’s and so on every year. Waiting is no good. And what do they do while they wait ? Do they plough or study or teach in the school ? ’

‘ No, they do nothing but walk about the village and grumble and get into mischief, and forget all they ever learnt.’

‘ Do you think that adds to their qualifications for a job ? Why, in three years they have forgotten so much and are so inured to idleness that they are utterly useless, and if they did get a job they would be kicked out in six months.’

‘ That’s very likely indeed, Socrates. Idleness doesn’t improve people. They soon become confirmed loafers if they have no work to do.’

‘ Now, look here, you ex-soldiers, you are wasting your money in turning your sons into B.A.’s. One in a hundred will get a job and a fairly good job too. But can you afford to spoil ninety-nine lads for the one success ? Of the rest, a few will get indifferently paid babus’ jobs but the vast majority must be content to teach in schools and start on low pay. If they are not ready to accept that, they have no business to waste your money struggling to be B.A.’s.’

‘ We didn’t know anything of this, and when our boys said that the B.A. course was the best and most honourable we naturally paid the money and encouraged them to go on and take the examination.’

‘ Very creditable to your affection as fathers, but terribly stupid from a business point of view. In England they regard a literary degree as something of a luxury, not one in a hundred of our sons becomes a B.A. unless he is going to be a schoolmaster or a padre or to try for the Civil Service. Now mark this carefully. In future, just you ask your boy exactly what he intends to do in life, and if he says B.A. and Government service, discourage him firmly and at once, as there are thousands of others trying for it too, and unless your boy is

very lucky or very brilliant, it's useless his trying. Try and interest your boy in doctoring—of men and of animals—or in engineering or in electricity, or in trade or commerce or manufacturing, or in agriculture, or in ships and sailing, in some profession in fact in which a man can earn his living without going into a Government office. Above all, don't encourage him to go into the law, that's already hopelessly overcrowded and always will be.'

'But even doctors and engineers hang about after Government service.'

'That's only temporary and won't last long. India is rapidly waking up and people are beginning to realize they must put their money into other things besides litigation and the buying of land and jewellery. It will not be long before they start sinking capital in land improvement and in industry, and will be ready to spend money on education and on curing diseases of men and animals. Then will come the demand for doctors, vets., engineers of all kinds and men skilled in agriculture and industry and chemistry and everything else. Why, look at engines and motors, how they are increasing everywhere, and yet none of your boys ever think of learning all about them so that they may be able to repair them or take agencies for selling them or take contracts for erecting them. Why, every well in India wants at least one pump of some kind. Think of the work involved in deciding which kind of pump is wanted and in making the pumps and in putting them up. Won't that be work for many lads now idling about as unwanted B.A.'s? There are thousands of acres in your District where all kinds of fruit could be grown, but none of your sons ever learn about fruit growing. A couple of acres of fruit trees are worth more than a Naib Tahsildari.'

'Certainly they are.'

'And what about craftsmen? We want skilful and educated craftsmen to make furniture and all manner of things in wood and metal, to make bricks and tiles and pipes, to make cloth and the hundred and one other things that you now buy from outside the District.'

' But that is menials' work, not for sons of soldiers and zamindars.'

' Don't be so silly. How often must I tell you that if you go on standing on your dignity like this and leaving all the profitable work to the menials, in fifty years you will awake too late to find that the menials are the masters and you are the menials.'

' I believe you are right there,' said one older than the rest.

' The menials are steadily rising and we are steadily sinking.'

' All because you are afraid of putting your hands to good hard honest work.'

' That's correct, I fear, Socrates,' said the old man.

' And what about electricity ? ' said Socrates. ' That is only just beginning in India and will give work for vast numbers of young men clever enough to learn about it while they are young. Electricity will rule the world in a few years.'

' We've heard about electricity but we never connected it with a livelihood for our children.'

' But that's not all. Why, I know an ex-officer in England who is making a comfortable living by keeping fowls. Profitable poultry-rearing of course requires much hard work and knowledge and some capital. It is no mere job for the spare time of menials, either here or in England.'

' Wâh ! Wâh ! Socrates ! There seem to be lots of professions besides clerkships and Tahsildaris, but we are in the habit of thinking of nothing but these things. We are in a groove and the new things don't seem to strike us.'

' Well, get out of the groove before it's too late and you've wasted your money and ruined your sons. You don't want to spend your old age under the curses of an idle useless son whom you were too short-sighted to train to some useful profession. When you were a boy, there were so few boys at school that every Entrance-passed boy was not " Entrance-passed " into the University but " Entrance-passed " straight into Government service. That's all gone now. You must live with the times. Don't crowd into already overcrowded professions. It's no use marching a regiment in line on to a footbridge which will only take two at a time. Why, do you

know that the driver of a mail train on the railway draws more pay than any Tahsildar and more than many Deputies? And it's a very good life, too.'

'No, we never knew that. It's obviously high time we opened our eyes and looked round, and ceased to be content with seeing our boys drift up to the colleges and join the company of unemployed and unwanted B.A.s.'

'That's right,' said Socrates, moving away. 'Good luck to you with your deputation to the District Officer—I pity him!—and remember that a skilful carpenter with a good business is better than ten idle B.A.'s.'

XII

DRAGONS

ONE day Socrates was walking with a friend when they saw a young man coming to meet them. His step was springy, his face was keen, he was obviously fit and educated and ready for any high and noble enterprise.

'That's the lad for my work,' said Socrates, 'I must have a talk with him,' and he began to shout, 'Hi, sir, hi, I would like to have a word with you.'

'Wait a bit, Socrates,' said his friend. 'He can't possibly hear you at that distance. Let him come a bit nearer first, you are far too impatient. If you go on shouting like that, everyone will think you are mad.'

'They all think that already,' said Socrates.

When the young man came close, Socrates and his friend noticed that he was dressed in a sort of khaki uniform and carried a peculiar staff. He had a scarf round his neck and the upper half of his clothes was adorned with signs and badges and gadgets, which made the wearer look still smarter.

'Good morning, sir,' said Socrates. 'Excuse my inquisitiveness, but may I know who you are and why you wear all this finery? I am Socrates, you know, and Socrates is always allowed to ask innumerable and rather foolish questions.'

‘ I am a Rover Scout, Socrates.’

‘ What is that ? ’

‘ Well, the Rover Scout is the successor of the knight errant of the middle ages. He is always going about looking for good turns to do and he has to be always ready to help.’

‘ I know the knight errant,’ said Socrates. ‘ He was the picturesque fellow in tin armour and a great long sword and a pair of great spiky spurs who rode about beheading fire-breathing dragons and rescuing distressed damsels.’

‘ Yes, that’s the man.’

‘ Why ! he must have sounded like a cartload of empty petrol tins as he rode along. I wonder his horse didn’t bolt and throw him off from sheer fright ! ’

‘ Well, anyway, he must have been extremely hardworking and efficient as there are no dragons to-day. The knight errants have absolutely annihilated the whole species and left none for us to try our mettle on. That’s why I’m idle to-day, Socrates ! ’

‘ Annihilated the whole species ! Not a bit ! There are more fire-breathing dragons to-day than ever before. The whole country is stiff with them, particularly the towns where you Rover Scouts live.’

‘ They always say you are mad, Socrates. I think they must be right. Where are there any dragons nowadays except in your imagination ? ’

‘ My imagination, indeed ! Open your eyes, young man, and look round you. Our beloved country is seething with communal unrest. Suspicion, distrust and hatred are all around us. Religion hates religion. Tribe fights with tribe. Are not these a whole crop of dragons far worse than any of the medieval kind ? Do they not breathe fire, do they not burn up the country ? Do they not jeopardize the whole future of India ? ’

‘ That’s quite right, Socrates, but we have no armour against this kind of dragon.’

‘ Of course you have, your armour is your firm faith in your own religion and your sword is your determination to respect everyone else’s religion. Your plan of battle is the Scout law.

Thus armed and equipped, Rover Scout, go forth to fight these dragons, tackle them wherever you meet them, search them out and behead them. Rest not till the last fire-breathing dragon of communal hatred and suspicion is dead.'

'I will, Socrates. God helping me, I will lose no opportunity, and I will seek every opportunity of spreading peace and goodwill amongst the various communities of my countrymen.'

'Splendid! And now for distressed damsels.'

'You are very wonderful, Socrates, but you surely can't find any distressed damsels for us to rescue nowadays?'

'Of course I can. I can show you swarms of them.'

'Where?'

'Well, the essence of a distressed damsels is innocence and helplessness, isn't it?'

'That is so.'

'Well, look at our towns. They are full of children. Children, like all other animals, must play every day if they are to grow up strong and healthy. Our town children are growing up unhealthy because they do not play enough.'

'There are your distressed damsels then. Now for their rescue. Every mohalla has some place, big or small, where games of some kind or other can be organized for the little ones.' Bigger boys can be taken outside the town for their games. Where there are tanks, canals or rivers, swimming, diving and boating can be practised, and swimming races, boat-races and perhaps water-polo organized. On the banks you can play volley-ball and kabaddi to get warm after your bathing. For the very big ones what about week-end hikes on foot or bicycle?

'Every rover scout is a trained organizer, so get on with it, my lad, and organize games for the kiddies of your mohalla or town. There is a grand bit of work for you to do. Tell us how you get on and what difficulties you meet with, so that we may suggest ways out of them.'

'FIRE-BREATHING DRAGONS TO KILL AND DISTRESSED DAMSELS TO RESCUE! FORWARD THE ROVER SCOUTS!'

XIII

BRIGHTER SCHOOLS

SOCRATES was wandering one day far from his usual haunts and he came to a village school. No one expected him and it was a school of the old type in an out-of-the-way village, far from the routes of inspecting officers and District officials. In walked Socrates without a word, and lo and behold—there was the master in shabby and rather dirty and carelessly put on clothes, reclining on a charpoy, with a couple of boys massaging his fat calves. When he saw Socrates he sprang to his feet and tried to conceal behind his legs the hookah that he had been fondling when Socrates suddenly turned up like an apparition from another world. The master knew the sage by sight and by reputation and, though he had no respect for him, he feared his sharp tongue and the angry look in his eyes.

‘Good morning, masterji,’ said Socrates very quietly, ‘so this is how you prepare the youth of this village for the battle of life?’

‘I don’t understand—what do you mean? What battle? I don’t follow you—yes, no, please’—and so on and so forth did he burble in confusion as he shuffled about uneasily under the fixed gaze of Socrates’ eyes.

‘I mean what I say, masterji—this school exists, and you exist, to prepare these village boys for the battle of life,’ and then Socrates looked round at the boys. Some had torn and dirty clothes, many had dirty eyes and faces and running noses, some were fidgeting and scratching themselves, others were picking their noses. Some had ear-rings or bangles and anklets on. Many were pitted with small-pox scars. Finger nails were generally dirty. Every now and then one would get up and go just outside the building to ease himself and then stroll back to his seat. There was a hum of listless voices as they learned their lifeless lessons and all but one or two seemed to care little whether they learnt anything or not.

‘What a picture !’ said Socrates, ‘the future citizens of a self-governing country in the making !’

‘What do you mean ?’ asked the teacher, who was by now beginning to recover from his first surprise and confusion
‘This is a village school under the Local Body and I am a trained teacher, teaching the textbooks according to the curriculum laid down for my guidance.’

‘Splendid,’ said Socrates. ‘But may I humbly inquire a few things ?’

‘Certainly, Socrates. I can spare a minute or two from my arduous duties to talk to you.’

‘Thank you, masterji. Well, my first question is: Will not these boys one day be the fathers of the next generation ?’

‘Yes, if they survive so long, Socrates.’

‘Exactly ! If they are not going to survive, is it not waste of time educating them ?’

‘Certainly, but what a foolish question ! We all die at our appointed time.’

‘Yes, but by taking a few simple precautions, we can postpone the appointed time for many years, unless some unlooked-for accident overwhelms us.’

‘I have heard, Socrates, that in some countries they live longer than in ours, but that is doubtless due to the climate.’

‘Not a bit. In England, for example, the death-rate was as high as yours not so many years ago.’

‘Then how do they prolong life now ?’

‘By close attention to the simple rules of health and cleanliness, which are much the same for every climate and every race.’

‘Then why do not we do the same in this country ?’

‘Exactly, masterji, that was the very question I was going to ask. When you admit that these boys are to be the fathers of the next generation, and that it is waste of time educating them if they are not going to survive to reach man’s estate, had you not better teach them as the first of all your lessons the simple rules of health ?’

‘I do not know them myself, Socrates, and they are not in my books.’

'Shame! Shame!' said Socrates, 'have I not been teaching these things for years and can you tell me at this time of day, masterji, that you do not know them?'

'I certainly do not, Socrates.'

'Well, it would take more time than you could spare for me to teach you everything now, masterji, but in simple words the first big thing is cleanliness. Clean faces and hands and nails and bodies and clothes. Dirt brings disease, so neither your boys, nor your school, nor the surroundings of your school must be anything but spotlessly clean. But, of course, masterji, practice is better than precept, and you must start with yourself. You must be an example to your boys, scrupulously clean yourself with clean and tidy clothes and a clean tongue which is never fouled with nasty words.'

'That is the hardest part of all, Socrates.'

'Courage, masterji, stick to it and it will soon become a habit and then you will be proud of yourself and your boys.'

'But how can I clean the surroundings of my school?'

'A pit must be dug into which all paper and rubbish is thrown and the pit must be fitted up as a rustic latrine. If you teach the children to use a latrine when they are small, they will acquire such self-respect that when they grow up they will never submit to the evil habit of easing themselves all round the village, and one of the worst customs in India will disappear in one generation; and all because you school-masters realized your duty of preparing your boys for the great battle of life.'

'I think I begin to see what you mean now by the battle of life, Socrates. The boy must be able to fight against disease and he must be taught it all at school and must leave school as far as possible protected against the common ailments that shorten life and reduce efficiency.'

'Yes, that is part of it, masterji. You know well enough that what is taught at school is never forgotten.'

'That is right, Socrates. Everything learnt in later life can be forgotten, but never what is well learnt in childhood.'

'Then arm your boys to fight disease, first by cleanliness and clean habits, then by vaccination and by a knowledge of such

things as quinine, mosquito-nets and the ways of reducing the number of mosquitoes and the ways of cleaning and keeping clean a drinking well. They must also know all about flies, how they spread disease and how they can be got rid of and how they can be prevented from being a danger. And, of course, no boy must wear ornaments, masterji. That is a wasteful, dirty and dangerous habit.'

'I quite agree, Socrates, but is this all?'

'By no means, but it is a good lot. The next big thing is to teach self-control, as the citizens of a great self-governing country must not only be protected from disease but they must be disciplined and self-controlled.'

'How do I teach this part, Socrates?'

'The first lessons must be taught by the mother, starting the day the child is born, but till the mothers themselves are taught they cannot help much. You must, therefore, do all in your power to encourage the people to send their daughters to school, and you must keep your school so well and your character must be so good and your influence with the parents so great, that in the absence of a girls' school they will gladly send their little daughters with their brothers to your school.'

'That should not be difficult, Socrates. The boys and girls all play together in the village and the standard of honour is very high. There will be little objection to sending them to school together, once the idea begins to spread among the people.'

'You will spread it, masterji. Meanwhile you must teach self-control by checking all bad tricks and habits amongst the boys. No scratching, no fidgeting, no picking of nose, mouth or face, no foul words, no foul jokes, no spitting and no easing themselves where they like—like animals in fact—but only in the proper place prepared by you for their use. You can do a lot by the way you teach them to play their games.'

'What a task, Socrates!'

But what a reward, masterji, the realization that you are sending out into the world a generation of clean, healthy, self-reliant, self-controlled and disciplined young citizens, prepared for the battle of life and ready and anxious to leave

the world better than they found it. The village will hold you in honour and you will ever be remembered as one who did his duty to his country.'

' Your ideal of the village school, Socrates, is high indeed, a centic of light and culture in the village, but I can quite see that it is no more than what we teachers should all aim at making it. God grant I may be able to change my ways and bring myself and my school up to your high standard, Socrates.'

XIV

THE PRINCIPAL INDUSTRY

SOCRATES was looking at the buildings and public institutions in a place which he had not visited before and, as usual, asked to see the hospital, particularly the section where women and children were treated.

' Why are you so anxious to see the women's section, Socrates ? We men have to do all the work ; surely we are most entitled to medical aid.'

' Work, indeed ! ' said Socrates. ' You spend twice the time on your hookahs that the women spend on gossiping. They are very rarely idle at any time during the year, while you are often idle for weeks together. But there are two very special reasons why women are entitled to more medical aid than you are, and to the aid of doctors of their own sex, too.'

' What are they, Socrates ? '

' The first is that owing to your man-made rules about pardah and so on they are unable and unwilling to consult a male doctor about anything but the simplest ailments. The really important things they will not mention to anyone but a female doctor.'

' That is right, of course, Socrates, but what is the other reason ? '

' You must know the second reason yourselves. If you really don't, then the selfish carelessness of you men can be the only reason that you don't know it.'

' Well, what is it ? I swear we don't know why women are specially entitled to medical aid.'

' You only want a doctor when you are ill, eh ? '

' Yes, that is so.'

' Well, a woman is often the better for a visit to the doctor, even when she is in the most perfect state of health.'

' What do you mean, Socrates ? '

' Pregnancy and childbirth, of course. How often do women die or lose their health over this perfectly normal and natural function ? '

' Only too often, Socrates, but we never thought of that.'

' No, that's just what I complain of. You men never think of anything but your own comfort. Now will you agree with me that women are more entitled to medical aid than men ? '

' Willingly, Socrates, now you have explained it.'

' Then let us look at their section of the hospital.'

And so the party did. The whole hospital was fifty or sixty years old, and quite unfitted for the purposes for which it had to be used, but the women's section was far smaller and far worse than the men's.

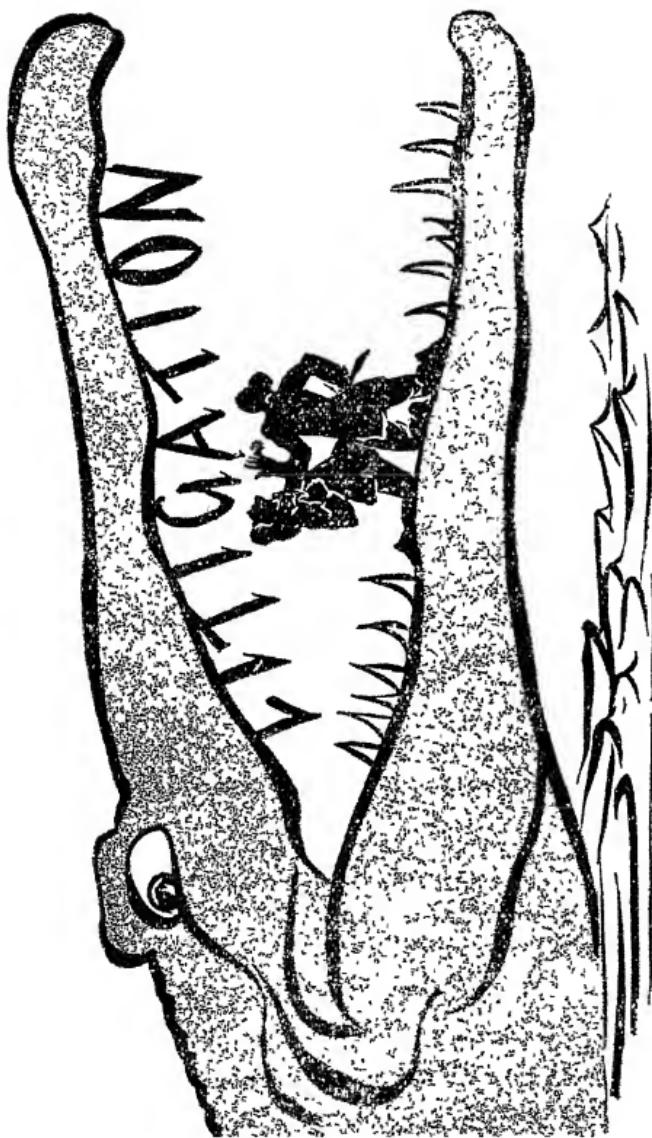
' That is how you carry out your obligations to your womenfolk,' said Socrates, as he left the building in disgust.

On the way home, they saw a lovely new building which must have cost lakhs of rupees. Beautiful porticoes and verandahs and, inside, grand furniture and fittings and everything up-to-date and perfectly adapted for the purposes for which it was built. This was the new court-house and every one was proud of it. ' The best in the Province,' they kept saying.

' Splendid,' said Socrates. ' Now I know where your heart is, and where your money goes. No wonder your hospital is such a tumbledown old set of barns and hovels.'

' But Government built this court-house, Socrates ! '

' Of course it did. It had to. Government always builds what the people most desire. If your heart was set on medical



WHO PROFITS?

aid, and you hated litigation, you would have the best hospital in the Province and sixty-year-old court-houses. But as your heart is set on litigation, this is the result.

‘ Well can I see the crowds of people collected for the inauguration of this Temple of Litigation. I can hear your address of gratitude to whoever comes to open the buildings. “ Sir,” you said, “ we thank you for building this grand institution. Some fools may desire hospitals, others co-operative banks, yet others football grounds and cricket pavilions. We worship in another temple. Our hobby is litigation, our chief industry is litigation. To litigation we give our best brains ; upon litigation we spend our time, our money, and our thoughts. Our whole life and interest centres round this Temple of Litigation which we now ask you to open,” and then you handed him a golden key and the temple was duly opened. Is that about what happened ? ’

‘ No, Socrates, you are fooling us.’

‘ I wish I were, but every word I said is true, and well you know it.’

‘ We are fond of litigation, certainly, but—— ’

‘ You will go a hundred miles to engage a pleader but you will not go five to get 8A wheat seed for your fields or to take your child to a hospital ; and as for your womenfolk, you take no thought of their troubles at all. You will gladly pay a fee of fifty rupees for a lawsuit, but which of you has ever paid fifty rupees to fetch a doctor for his wife or as a subscription to a hospital ? ’

‘ Enough, Socrates. We plead guilty. Give us a chance and we will mend our ways.’

‘ God grant you may mend them quickly,’ said Socrates, as he said good-bye to his companions. ‘ And let me suggest ’, he added, turning back to them, ‘ that some of you try a co-operative female hospital.’

‘ How can we do that ? ’

‘ Just the same as any other co-operative society or union. Several hundred of you agree to pay so much a year, say five rupees, and draw up by-laws and elect a committee. The committee engages the lady doctor and starts the hospital.

It will take a lot of working out, but once your hospital is a going concern you will be the proudest men in the Province ; shareholders of the first co-operative women's hospital paid for solely by yourselves. No begging, no grants, independent villagers running their own show and beholden to none.'

' You are right there, Socrates. We should certainly be proud men. Your idea is worth thinking over, even in these hard times.'

' Not "even in these hard times,"' said Socrates. ' You mean "because of these hard times," as your only chance of lady doctors for many years to come is to pay for them yourselves.'

XV

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

SOCRATES was coming into the village when he heard a great noise and commotion round the corner towards the village meeting place. Loud and angry voices were raised in heated argument and people were hurrying up to join in and miss none of the row. A village is a dull spot. Even a dog fight is a welcome diversion, so by the time that Socrates reached the spot there were close on a hundred people crowded round, some backing one side and some the other.

' It's my right and I will do it,' shouted a very excited man, as he fingered a brass-bound lathi which he was obviously ready to use at a second's notice and on the least excuse whatever. ' It's my right,' he said again, and stopped as his eyes followed the eyes of his companions and lighted on Socrates, who had just elbowed his way through the crowd and stood beside him.

' Well done, chaudhriji ! Stand up for your rights like a man,' said Socrates, and patted him on the back.

' It's my right ! ' he shouted again, and nearly deafened poor Socrates who was standing only a foot away.

'Most certainly it is,' said Socrates, 'but shouting won't improve your case. If your claim is really good, you can afford to speak quite quietly about it.'

'It's my right!' he said again, nearly as loud as before.

'What is this right of yours, my good man, that you seem so insistent about?' But before Socrates could get an answer he was off again, ranting about his rights.

'Now look here, my friend,' said Socrates, 'try and listen to me for a moment.'

'It's my——'

'Never mind that just now. I willingly admit every word you say, but I want you to understand quite clearly that every right you claim has a corresponding duty, and if you choose to exercise the right you must carry out the duty as well, and if you are not willing to carry out the duty you cannot claim the right. Is that quite clear?'

'What do you mean? My right is my right, and that's an end of it!'

'No, it isn't; it's only the beginning of it.'

'Here, Socrates! No riddles, please,' said several. 'Explain yourself a bit.'

'I am sorry,' said Socrates, 'I thought I had already been too clear for our friend here, but if you like I'll have another try. Let me give you several instances. It's my right to eat beef or pork or smoke cigarettes, but it's my duty to see that by doing so I do not give offence to my neighbours. Now do you follow?'

'Yes, that's easy enough, but those are all special cases.'

'Very well, try this. It is my right to drive my car at full speed along the road, but it is my duty to see that no one is frightened or hurt by my doing so. It is my right to use any language I like, but it is my duty to see that I do not give offence to anyone by what I say, particularly to women and children.'

'I think I understand that,' said the schoolmaster who had joined the crowd.

'Good; now let me tell you some more practical ones for your village life here.'

'Very well,' said several, 'but you won't find much wrong with us at any rate. We are all very careful about our rights here.'

'Oh ! Shan't I ! We'll see. Now then. It is my right to ease myself where I like and to throw rubbish where I like—'

'There's no duty there, anyway,' said everyone.

'—But it is my duty to see that by so doing I do not make a smell that will offend anyone, and that I do not foul the ground where the children play round the village, and I do not produce conditions that will encourage flies to breed and spread disease and dirt in the village.'

'That's an impossible duty, Socrates.'

'Quite possible, and absolutely necessary if you wish to lead healthy civilized lives.'

'How are we to carry out the duty ? We must know that, as anyway we can't avoid exercising the right.'

'Pits, pits, pits,' said Socrates.

'It's always pits, Socrates ! Can't you forget them for a bit ?'

'How can I, when my nose and eyes and—oh, bother these flies ! They are the worst reminder of all—everything else keeps telling me that you have still neglected the very first step towards health and comfort and happiness and wealth ?'

'We've got them in our school, Socrates,' said the schoolmaster. 'Every school in the district now has your pits, and pit-latrines.'

'Then yours is the first District in India to teach sanitary habits to the village boys. But shall I tell you some more duties ?'

'Go ahead, Socrates, if you are still dissatisfied !'

'Well, it is my right to let off fireworks all night and to hire a band to play all night at a family function, but it is my duty to see that I do not keep waking up the children and sick people.'

'That's hard,' said the lambardar. 'Do you mean we must not do these things at night ?'

‘ Well, you must find out first if you will cause any trouble by doing them and, if you are likely to, you must stop at a reasonable hour and go on again next day.’

‘ Then you won’t like those “ pip-pip ” engines that grind flour in the villages ? ’

‘ Those are the worst of all. I have seen them working so close to a school that no one could teach or learn, and the owner was quite hurt when I told him my opinion of him ’

‘ Are there any other things you object to, Socrates ? ’

‘ Plenty more, but I won’t trouble you with them all just now. I will only mention a few of the simplest. It’s my right to spend my money as I like but it is my duty to use some, at least, of my money to help all these good things like hospitals, district councils, and so on which are established for our betterment. Secondly it is my right to graze my goats all over these hills, but it is my duty to see that they do not destroy the grass and trees on the hills and thereby ruin both the hills and the plains below.’

‘ But if goats graze on the hills, the hills are bound to be ruined.’

‘ Exactly, and therefore the grazing of goats on the hillside is wrong.’

‘ What is the principle, Socrates, on which you go in these matters ? You have picked on nearly everything we do and condemned it outright.’

‘ And well I might : your thoughtless ways are responsible for most of your troubles. The principle is quite simple. If you wish to live together and be happy and prosperous, you must always consider the effect of your actions on other people. All your rights are limited by other people’s rights—and not only by their rights but by their health and convenience as well. So instead of blindly insisting on your rights, just try and fit in with your neighbours so that you may all be comfortable and healthy instead of living in a constant state of discomfort, ill health and quarrelling.’

XVI

THE BETTER WAY

'How are you getting on, Subedar Sahib,' asked Socrates, 'with all the new things which the *Nai Zindgi* has taught you to do ?'

'We are not getting on very well,' said the subedar. 'People will not do as I tell them.'

'Then you are no leader,' said Socrates. 'Perhaps you don't set them an example by doing the things yourself. You merely try to lead with your tongue.'

'No, Socrates. I have dug my pit and I have done everything else myself, but even so the people will not follow my example. If only we village leaders had the power to impose fines on the people I am sure they would obey us then.'

'So am I,' said Socrates. 'There would be wonderful progress. Even without fining and punishment, if the District Officer sent out written orders that the pits were to be dug and various other things done they would certainly be done in nineteen villages out of twenty, as you are all loyal and obedient people, but as soon as the District Officer went away everything would go back to what it was before, so that there will be no real progress that way, Subedar Sahib.'

'That is so, I am afraid,' said the subedar.

'We can do a lot by "hukams" and "jemadari," but it has no permanent effect. As soon as the pressure is removed the work stops.'

'That is correct,' said the subedar. 'I am afraid that is the way in our country. We would cheerfully obey at the time, but equally cheerfully would we stop obeying as soon as the order ceased to be given. We like having somebody to tell us what to do but as soon as they stop telling us we stop doing it.'

'Any progress', said Socrates, 'to be real and lasting must come from within. People must do what they do because

they are convinced it is the right, practical and common-sense thing to do. And as for the children, we must teach them all these things until they become habits, so that when they grow up it will be just as much a habit to do the right and the clean thing as it is the habit now to do the wrong and the dirty thing.'

'That way, I am sure, lies real progress,' said the subedar, 'but it is going to take a long time to get very far.'

'Then you must work all the harder,' said Socrates, 'so that in your time at least some improvement may be visible and you may leave things better for your children than your father left them for you.'

'How must I work, Socrates? I am already doing all I can.'

'You must stop trying to work alone and get your fellow-villagers to join hands with you.'

'How am I to do that?'

'Form a co-operative society to do all these things you are working at, persuade your village to set up a panchayat. Once your village is organized in these ways all you will have to do is to convince the panchayat or the bank committee, and then they will set to work and make byelaws of all the simple things that must be done, and you will at once get all the help you want to put things right and train people to a sense of duty towards their village, and of responsibility for its improvement.'

XVII

ALL MUST HELP

'Why don't you join the District Community Council, Mr Shopkeeper?' asked Socrates as he passed through a village. 'It runs a village newspaper and is doing a lot of good work for your District.'

'Good, indeed! What good does either the Council or its newspaper do to me?' asked the shopkeeper.

'Well, the Council and its newspaper are trying to increase the wealth of the people.'

'Yes, the wealth of the zamindars, not of us shopkeepers.'

'Quite right.'

'What good is that to us? If they tried to increase our wealth I would gladly join.'

'But surely you get your wealth by trading with the zamindar!'

'Yes, of course we do.'

'Then can't you see that the better his crops and the greater his wealth the more will he buy from you and the more crops will he bring to you to sell? Rich zamindars, rich shopkeepers. Hungry zamindars, starving shopkeepers.'

'Yes, that must be so,' said the shopkeeper, 'but we never look so far ahead as that; we never look beyond the corner of the bazaar.'

'Well, you'd better start doing so at once. This world is changing very fast and those who don't change with it will be left behind and lost. That's just what I spend all my time telling the zamindars and I tell you too.'

'That's very true, Socrates, and I'll join the Council, but I don't like its newspaper. It's for ever saying nasty things about money-lending and my relations lend money, and so do I, and I don't like reading a newspaper that condemns my means of livelihood.'

'But money-lending is dead,' said Socrates. 'What's the use of clinging to a corpse?'

'We certainly don't get much profit from it nowadays,' said the shopkeeper, 'but we think that's only temporary and hope things will improve soon and we shall again make money as of old.'

'Never!' said Socrates. 'Never! the day of the money-lender is over for ever. The age of banking has begun. We shall never go back to the family money-lender again. Just as railways and lorries have replaced bullock carts and camels, so banks have replaced money-lenders and those that stick to

money-lending will be lost. Why, look at the Jews in England. In the Middle Ages money-lending flourished and the Jews were the great money-lenders. But then banking was invented and it killed money-lending.'

' Why so ? '

' It's obvious,' said Socrates. ' It must always be cheaper to run a big bank with big capital than for each little family to run its own capital. Each family must make a living, however small its capital, and therefore a family money-lender must always charge higher rates. Besides all sorts of personalities enter into a money-lender's business and hinder it, and a bank is free from all that.'

' What have rates of interest got to do with it, Socrates ? '

' India is now in the vortex of world prices and markets and whether she likes it or not can never again get out of it, so that if she cannot produce things as cheaply as other countries she must suffer. So the Indian farmer can no longer afford to go on paying high rates of interest.'

' But what happened to those Jews? When money-lending stopped they must all have been ruined.'

' Far from it. They took to trade and business and are far richer now than they ever were with money-lending and are far more respected. The few who stick to money-lending are regarded as outcasts and blood-suckers by the rest.'

' Many people call even us bad names, although they could not do without us.'

' Quite so. That's where a bank has the advantage. You private money-lenders have to charge high rates of interest to make a living and no one likes paying out money. They flatter you when they want more money and abuse you when the time for repayment comes. A bank has no personality about it, and anyone can hold shares in it, the rates of interest are lower and the profits are shared by a large number of people, and so everyone recognizes its value and no one abuses it.'

' Then what are we to do, Socrates? You usually have a remedy for all the things you criticize.'

' The remedy is easy. As long as you lend money you must charge high rates of interest and the zamindar

'borrowers must pay them, so that debt is increasing and you and the zamindars are like two men struggling in the water. You both cling together and both must drown.'

'Well, how are we to swim out?'

'The life-boat is co-operation.'

'How will co-operation help the money-lender?'

'He will put his money into the village credit society and the Central Bank.'

'Yes, but the rates of interest are too low, I shall not be able to live on my capital.'

'I don't intend you just to invest your money and sit idle.'

'What am I to do then?'

'Put your spare capital into the bank and trade with the rest.'

'But I am already trading.'

'Yes, but can't you see that when the zamindar gets his money from the co-operative society at low rates of interest and when he learns to double his income by better farming, better health and all that, as the District Community Council and its weekly newspaper are now teaching him, he will have very much more money to spend?'

'But he will just put it into the bank and replace my capital.'

'Some no doubt, he will, but by no means all. Better farming means more expenditure. Better farming means more money, and more money means better living, and better living means more expenditure. More expenditure means business for you. You will both rise together to prosperity. Every increase of prosperity means more capital saved and more capital wanted. By the time that every acre of land has had another hundred rupees of capital put into it the farmer will be prosperous and so will you.'

'I don't follow all this,' said the shopkeeper.

'When the farmer starts better farming he will want a variety of implements. You will provide them if you are wise. He will want better seed. You will provide that, too. You will search for fields with good kinds of crops growing in them and arrange to buy up the produce so that you may sell

it to your clients as seed next year. When the farmer begins to make more profits his wife will want a sewing machine and a large variety of domestic odds and ends of all kinds. You will be watching for this and at once stock them for her. Trade and commerce will flourish as they never did before and your prosperity will increase accordingly.'

' You foresee a great future for me, Socrates. I don't know whether my imagination is quite as good as yours.'

' Then wake up and educate yourself. Join the Council and read the *Nai Zindgi*, study the farmer's needs and be ready with the stuff he wants. Spend your time seeing how you can increase the farmer's wealth so that he will have more money to spend and then see to it that you have just the stuff he wants when he comes to spend his money. Why! a wise shopkeeper, instead of lending cash at sowing time would lend 8A wheat seed. A wise shopkeeper would encourage all manner of experiments in crops and implements and methods in the hopes of increasing both his clients' wealth and their needs as well.'

' I see your meaning, Socrates, but I doubt if many of us are alive enough and long-sighted enough to carry out what you suggest.'

' Well, make a start,' said Socrates. ' Join the Council, read the *Nai Zindgi* and spend your time thinking not how you can get thirty-six per cent for your money, but how you can increase the resources and the needs of your clients so that you may all become rich together instead of both starving together as you are now.'

' That's true enough, Socrates. I will at any rate join your Council and read that paper and then see what I can do towards carrying out the rest of the programme you have drawn up.'

' That's right, Mr. Shopkeeper, and always remember there should be no quarrel and no conflict of interests between you and the zamindar. Your interests are identical. You both want good health and bumper crops and that's what the District Community Council and the *Nai Zindgi* are there to help you to get. You cannot do without the zamindar and he

cannot do without you. You each have your own special function to perform in the rural commonwealth and the better you each perform it the richer you will both be, and neither of you can be rich if the other is poor.'

XVIII

FOUR POSSIBILITIES

' You are always telling us the same things, Socrates, again and again,' complained the zaildar, as they rode along the canal together.

' Well, what am I to do, zaildarji ? Wherever I go I see the same dirt, the same ignorance, the same bad seed, the same bad farming, the same waste, the same ear-rings, litigation, drink, and all the other things that make me so angry. If you will give up these silly habits and take to sensible ways of farming and clean and thrifty ways of living, I will change my tune at once and be delighted to do so. Don't, please, think it amuses me repeating day after day all these simple things which you seem so extremely slow to understand and so extremely slow to put right.'

' Why are you so anxious we should put them right, Socrates ? '

' Well, I draw my living from you zamindars and I see ruin staring you in the face if you do not mend your ways. What am I to do ? Warn you, or let you go on as you are and be ruined ? '

' We are certainly very slow to act on your advice, Socrates, though most of us are convinced that you are right in what you say.'

' Then you are going to your ruin with your eyes open ? '

' Half open, Socrates ; but what is going to come of it all ? What do you suggest should be done about it ? '

' There are several possibilities, zaildarji. One is to let you all alone and let nature's law of "the survival of the fittest" settle the business.'

' How does that work, Socrates ? '

' That is what they do in some countries, where only those who sow the best seed, farm in the best way possible, use banks, allow no waste and use their brains at all times, have any hope of keeping their farms these hard times. The rest, sooner or later, have to abandon their farms and drift into the towns or join the ranks of the workless or of the daily labourers.'

' Where would they go in this country, Socrates ? '

' Oh, the towns, the factories, the jails, and the graveyards would absorb them all in time, I suppose.'

' But that would be the fate of every one of us, Socrates. We none of us farm or live well enough to survive that hard test.'

' That would certainly be a terrible course to follow, zaildarji. The country would be full of landless, hopeless, ruined men, and everywhere there would be crime and revolution.'

' Is there any other remedy ? '

' Yes, let us have ten years of Mussolini.'

' Mollisoni ? I thought that was a kind of cotton.'

' No, Mussolini, I said.'

' Who is he, then ? '

' He is a beneficent despot. Everyone has to do as he says. He says, " Farm properly, work hard, waste nothing," and he shows the people how to do it. They do it and are happy and prosperous. If they don't do it, he punishes them.'

' We would welcome him gladly. Can't you arrange for him to come here ? It would save us infinite botheration.'

' I wish I could, but a certain number of people say that his methods are against the principles of liberty.'

' Never mind that, Socrates. What are the principles of liberty compared to health and wealth ? '

' I agree with you, zaildarji. It would be easier for all of us if we could be told what to do and then just do it without argument or discussion.'

‘ Well, what else can we do, Socrates, to save ourselves ? ’

‘ The only other way is for you all to join together of your own accord and improve your ways of living and farming. That way is called co-operation and self-help. You can do everything by co-operation ; there is nothing you cannot do with its help. And as soon as you start joining together in sufficient numbers you can get laws made to help you, but until enough of you agree together that some law or other is necessary, it is no use making that law.’

‘ What sort of laws, Socrates ? ’

‘ Well, in some countries we keep the villages clean by law.’

‘ Excellent, Socrates. I wish you would do the same here.’

‘ As soon as enough of you want it, it will be done, but not until.’

‘ What other laws have you got in other countries, Socrates, that would help us ? ’

‘ In England they have to wash all the sheep twice a year in a certain medicine to keep off disease.’

‘ That’s a good law.’

‘ And no one is allowed to sell seed unless he has a certificate from the Agricultural Department that the seed is pure and will grow when it is sown.’

‘ A splendid law, Socrates. Why can’t we have these laws out here ? ’

‘ Because so few of you want them and so few of you would abide by them that it would be impossible to enforce them without armies of police and magistrates. As soon as you wake up and join together to work for your betterment you will yourselves want these laws and ask for them and then you will get them.’

‘ But those laws you mentioned are very hard laws and yet England is said to be very free.’

‘ That is so, but the majority of the English want their sheep to be free of disease and their seed to be good and their villages clean, so we agree to abide by these hard laws and feel no hardship in them.’

' How can we reach the stage of wanting such laws and agreeing to obey them ? '

' By joining together and working ; by banks and panchayats and rural councils and all the other ways of combining people for their betterment. And your rural councils must spread enlightenment among the people by every possible means, by newspapers and books and lectures and posters and songs and dramas, and by teaching all these things in the schools, until everyone knows all about them and begins to carry them out as part of his day's work and no longer regards them as strange new things to be avoided at all costs.'

' Is that what you call self-help, Socrates ? '

' That is so, zaildarji, and these are the possibilities for the future of you zamindars. Let me just run over them again to you to make sure you remember them. One is extermination and the survival of the fittest.'

' That won't do, Socrates.'

' Mussolini is the next.'

' We like him, but you say he's out of the question.'

' The next is self-help.'

' Difficult, Socrates, but in time, possibly, perhaps, in-shâlla—.'

' The fourth and last alternative, zaildarji, is to give way, cut down the land revenue to suit a peasantry that cannot and will not farm properly or live properly.'

' What will be the harm of doing that, Socrates ? '

' Everything else must be cut down to suit the reduced revenue—schools, hospitals, bulls, roads, everything. No more good seed, fewer officers and on lower pay—'

' We see little enough of our officers now in the villages, Socrates.'

' You will see nothing of them at all then. All progress will be slowed down—it is slow enough already—and the improvement that might have been made in ten years will be made in fifty and you will drop further and further behind the rest of the world. In other words the pace of our progress will be the pace not of the best zamindar but of the worst. slowest, idlest and stupidest.'

' That would be disastrous, Socrates. We had better try self-help ; that seems the best of the remedies you have suggested.'

' I agree. That is the only possible way for a self-respecting race of zamindars—self-help and co-operation.'

XIX

WHAT TO TEACH

' You look very peeved to-day,' said the subedar as Socrates stumped into the village and threw himself down on a charpoy at his usual haunt, the village meeting house.

' I hate dirt,' grunted the sage.

' We have suspected that for some time,' said the subedar.

' There is surely no need for you to get hot and bothered about it at this time of day ? '

' I thought it was only the villages that were dirty, but I find the whole country is dirty. You are all of you dirty, great and small. One is as bad as another.'

' Where have you been to-day to find all that out, Socrates ? '

' I had to go to the law courts—'

' I thought you didn't like the courts. You used to say that they were our national playing fields where we spent all our time and money, and so on.'

' Nor do I like the courts,' snapped Socrates. ' It wasn't my fault that I had to go, and I wish I had never been there.'

' Why, what did you see there ? '

' Hundreds of people scattering paper, chewing sugar-cane and spitting the refuse all over the place, horses and cattle tied anywhere and everywhere, littering the place with dung and attracting myriads of flies, and round every corner improvised urinals, piles of waste paper and rubbish and

even an improvised latrine in one place. I never saw such a sight.'

' That's nothing new, Socrates. What's everyone's business is nobody's business.'

' But it should be, and is, somebody's business to teach clean habits.'

' Whose business ? '

' Well ! it should certainly be taught at schools.'

' Why ! they are no better, Socrates. I was at school for a bit and we never bothered where we threw litter and we eased ourselves anywhere we liked outside the school compound without any one saying us nay.'

' Then what on earth is the good of my trying to teach clean ways to the village if the schoolboys are not learning better ways at school so as to take it up afterwards at home ? '

' You're right there, Socrates. If the young are not taught clean habits you're wasting your time fighting dirt in the village.'

' And, what's worse, I went from the courts to the house of an important gentleman and his compound was a litter of rubbish too. There was just a tidy patch near the front of the house and everywhere else and in all the corners and out-of-the-way places, the same old story of dirt and rubbish, rubbish and dirt.'

' They are all the same, Socrates. Houses and offices are all alike. A little tidiness in front—and round the corner every kind of muck and rubbish.'

' And whenever I say anything they curse the sweeper. The sweeper indeed ! It's no fault of his. He just does what he is told. He has never been taught any better. He knows nothing about rubbish pits, dust bins and latrines. Besides, what can he do, poor fellow ? One man against the whole world ! Everyone dirties the place, and if the sweeper objected he would soon be put in his place ! Every man ought to be followed about by his own sweeper to clean up the mess he makes. No ! Till people learn clean habits, the sweeper is helpless.'

' It is a matter of education again, Socrates.'

‘ It is. From the top downwards every one must be taught clean habits, taught to throw rubbish into the proper place, and not wherever they like, and what’s more, people must be taught to hate dirt, and taught to love tidiness and cleanliness. Dirt is vice, Dirt is sin, Dirt is disease, and until we all realize this our country will be untidy, uncomfortable, and unhealthy.’

‘ The streets are just the same, too, Socrates. The minute after the sweeper has passed by every shopkeeper starts throwing rubbish into the streets again and in two minutes they are as dirty as before. It is the same with latrines. Fifty yards from a latrine the ground is foul.’

‘ Ten thousand sweepers will not keep a town clean till the citizens learn clean habits.’

‘ That is only too true, Socrates.’

‘ And we all blame the Municipal Committee and the sweeper. It is no fault of theirs. It is the fault of all of us, and it is only to shield ourselves that we blame menials or subordinates. From the greatest downwards we must set our faces against dirt and untidiness and make our own houses and offices and compounds and courts and schools a model, and the rest of India will quickly follow.’

‘ That is so, Socrates. But we grown-ups are too set in the old ways to learn much good now. You must catch us young to teach us. The children are our only hope.’

‘ Well, what did I hear those lads with khaki pants and long sticks say the other day ? ’

‘ You mean the boy scouts ? ’

‘ That’s them. They had been to a Jumpty—Jabbery—what do they call it—meeting ? ’

‘ Jamboree is their queer name for it, I believe.’

‘ Yes, Jamboree, that’s it. I can’t get my tongue round their fancy words, but I can get their notions right into my heart. They had had a camp somewhere and helped to tidy up a village and when they left they said their orders were to leave behind them nothing but thanks and gratitude.’

‘ Well, I never—no empty tins, no dirty paper, no rubbish, no smells ? ’

'No, I went to see for myself and found they were perfectly right. There wasn't a sign of them having been there except a clean village and smiling, grateful villagers.'

'Well done. Long live the boy scouts! They'll put our country right, if they go on like that.'

'Indeed they will. You see their principle is not only to be clean but to think of others, and the root cause of all our dirt and untidiness is that we don't think of the effect of our actions on other people. We think it is our right to do as we like and forget that our rights must not be exercised so as to harm other people.'

'And in the end they harm ourselves too.'

'That is certain. When we do anything or refrain from doing anything, we must think "will my action harm someone else? If so am I justified in doing it?"'

'If only we could get into that habit our country would soon be clean and tidy and half our quarrels and troubles would be at an end too. Why, that would even stop our keeping the children awake by firing off bombs all night at our weddings.'

'Yes, that's a selfish custom, too. Well, good-bye, Subedar Sahib. Our talk has done me good and I feel less angry, but I often do despair for our country when I see what difficulties we are up against.'

XX

SATAN FINDS SOME MISCHIEF STILL

SOCRATES was riding along the road with a lambardar when he saw a big crowd in a field a short distance from the village

'What is that crowd watching?' asked Socrates.

'A dog-fight, probably,' said the lambardar, 'or else the police are rounding up a gang of thieves'

' Well, let's go and see ; if it's the police, we can at least help them. They have a hard time nowadays.'

' That's right enough,' said the lambardar, who was a man of some education and had seen a bit of the world. ' They are a brave and a loyal lot and we are at last beginning to realize they are our best friends and well worth helping, if we want peace in the country-side.'

' Well done, lambardarji. Come on, then, and let's join in.'

' But what will you do if it's a dog-fight, Socrates ? '

' You just listen to what I shall tell the dirty, idle, loafing cads if I find all those hundreds of villagers and ex-soldiers have turned out to watch a dog-fight ! '

' Well, let's hope it's not a dog-fight,' said the lambardar, inwardly praying it would be one, just in order to hear Socrates explode in his wrath against this cowardly form of sport.

But it was no dog-fight. Two villages were holding their weekly kabaddi match, with ground marked out, judge, scorer, printed rules, prizes and all.

' Another dream come true,' was all Socrates could say as he sat on his horse delightedly gazing at the unexpected sight.

' What dream, Socrates ? What's the matter ? . What's there about these games that pleases you so mightily ? '

' What is there to please me, lambardarji ? Can't you see that if this habit of organized games spreads your country is saved ? '

' How ? Why ? Explain yourself, Socrates. I see nothing special about a few loafers turning out to play kabaddi.'

' A few loafers, indeed ! You'd rather they sat on charpoys, smoking hookahs, telling dirty stories and hatching mischief and crime ? '

' No, I wouldn't, Socrates.'

' You'd rather they spent their time in family feuds, litigation, cattle-stealing, abducting each other's wives, murders, drink, and all the other kinds of crime and vice on which you villagers spend your time and money and ruin yourselves and your families and villages by following ? '

' No I wouldn't, Socrates, but—'

' You'd rather all the lads of brains and energy left the dirty dull village and went off to the towns ? '

' No, I wouldn't, Socrates, but I still can't see why you rave over a village kabaddi match.'

' Then you are blind, lambardarji. This is the beginning of the new era of village life.'

' How so, Socrates ? I know some countries are mad on games, but I never thought there was any object in it except a rather foolish waste of time and money.'

' Well, then, let me tell you, lambardarji. Who is going to live longer, the athletic games-playing man or the pot-bellied hookah-smoker ? Which village is going to be happier, the village whose young men play games or the village whose young men steal cattle, abduct women, fight each other with axes and lathis or clear off to the towns from sheer boredom ? Which family will be the better off, the family that spends its money in litigation or the family that plays kabaddi ? '

' I think I see your meaning, Socrates. Young people want occupation and amusement, want exercise and an outlet for their energies, and games will provide this once they are well organized and played in the right spirit.'

' Yes, and young people, like young animals, always want to compete against each other. So if there are no games they will surely fight, and games are much cheaper and healthier than fighting.'

' And not only the young want these things, Socrates. We want them at all ages.'

' One thing more, lambardarji: Aren't you troubled with cattle-stealing round here ? '

' It's an absolute pest, Socrates. No one's cattle are safe—the plough oxen at sowing-time, or the milch cow when there are young children in the house, it's all the same. It's the big river over there that's to blame. They steal cattle on this side and hide them in the riverside jungles till they can exchange them with cattle stolen on the other side. Once over the river there's not one chance in a thousand of the owner ever finding them again.'

' Well, my games will stop most of that, lambardarji.'

' How can they possibly do that, Socrates? This cattle-lifting has gone on for centuries and is woven into the very life of the people. Nothing can stop it. It will continue as long as there is jungle on the river-banks and young men in the villages.'

' Exactly, lambardarji. Young men in the villages.'

' How do you mean, Socrates?'

' Well, you know very well that this cattle-stealing is done for several reasons. There are a few small tribes and families of hereditary cattle-lifters.'

' We could easily deal with them, Socrates, if there were none others.'

' Quite so. The bulk of the stealing is done in pursuance of family feuds and by young men who do it out of bravado or as a relief from the boredom of village life. To such a pass has it come that in many villages a lad cannot wear a puggery till he has, so to speak, won his cattle-lifting colours.'

' That's perfectly true, Socrates, and has been going on from time immemorial.'

' Then my games are exactly what is wanted to stop all that. If the bright boy of the village can earn his colours for kabaddi or wrestling or football, in full view of the whole village, why should he sneak off at night and lose his night's sleep crawling after someone else's cattle?'

' That sounds all right, Socrates, and I know for myself, though I would not admit it in a law court or at the police-station over there, that the captain of our village kabaddi team used to be the leader of a very gay band of cattle-lifters, but he soon found that he could not run both sports at the same time, and so he gave up cattle-lifting and brought in most of his gang to join the kabaddi club.'

' There you are, lambardarji! It has already begun to take effect. And of course when you consolidate your holdings of land and fence your fields, cattle-stealing will rapidly come to an end, as the thieves will have to take their booty along the roads instead of driving them across country as they do nowadays.'

‘Slowly, Socrates, you are always looking so far ahead.’

‘Surely someone must look ahead, lambardarji. You don’t want to leave the future entirely to chance, do you?’

‘No, I suppose not, Socrates, but we villagers don’t think very far in any direction, I fear.’

‘Well, anyway you can see now, lambardarji, why organized games play such a vital part in my dream of the new village life. And one more thing,’ said Socrates.

‘What is that?’ asked the lambardar suspiciously, as Socrates’ sting is usually in his tail—his ‘one more thing’ is generally a nasty cut at someone.

‘These games will take you all away from the dirty village and its unpleasant surroundings for a couple of happy hours in the fresh air.’

‘You seem incapable of getting this sanitation business out of your mind, Socrates.’

‘You mean, I can’t get the smell of “home sweet home” out of my nose?’

‘Horrid! Socrates! Why need you be for ever talking about it?’

‘Do I go round your villages preaching loyalty to the Government?’

‘No, I’ve never heard you mention it.’

‘Quite so. I don’t preach loyalty because there’s no need to, as you villagers are just as loyal as I am. And so with your sanitation. When you dig your pits and keep your village clean you can trust me never to mention—’ but the rest of the sentence was lost in the noise of the happy shouting crowd as it broke up and streamed off home at the end of the prize-giving.

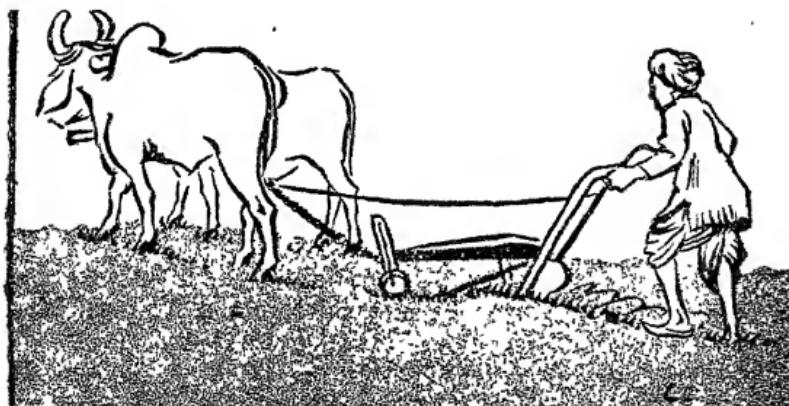
XXI

LEARN TO SPEND

‘I SEE the daily attendance is going down,’ said Socrates as he looked round a rural dispensary in a well-to-do part of the district which provided large numbers of magnificent soldiers for the army. ‘I suppose you are very healthy



FEVER is FREE BUT QUININE is CHEAPER



here in these little hill villages and getting still more so now that the cold weather is stopping the fever ? '

' No, it's not that,' said the doctor ; ' it's the two pice which the District Board now says that every new patient must pay before he is treated.'

' My goodness ! I should have thought the medicines alone were worth much more than that.'

' So they are, very much more.'

' And what about your services, Doctor Sahib ? Are they not worth two pice ? '

' That is not it,' said the lambardar, looking a trifle foolish.

' Well, what is the reason that a charge of two pice frightens people away from the only doctor and the only hospital and the only medicines for ten miles all round ? '

' They are not used to paying and think they should get treatment free.'

' Beggars again. When will you zamindars stop begging ? '

' But some of the patients are really poor, Socrates.'

' I know that only too well,' said Socrates, ' and would gladly see them treated free, but as you honourable zamindars and well-to-do gentry prefer to beg for your medicines and doctors instead of paying like the men of honour you should be, therefore the District Board has to make a charge of two pice from every one, both to make sure of getting something and to teach you the excellent habit of paying for what you receive. If you gentry think some people should be treated free, then leave money with the doctor from time to time for the benefit of the poor so that their pice may be paid from it.'

' But why should not the doctor treat us all free ? '

' Look here, you zamindars, you've told me often enough you don't want to pay any more taxes.'

' Certainly we don't.'

' Well, the District Board has reached the end of its resources and yet there are still large tracts without a hospital or a doctor.'

' Yes, there certainly are.'

' And every village is complaining that there are no trained dais and no female doctors at our dispensaries.'

'We certainly want them badly; we want them more than anything else.'

'Then how can you ever get them if those of you who can pay a little refuse to do so?'

'It does seem difficult, Socrates, but no one has ever told us this before.'

'Well, I tell you now. Think it well over. You will never have nurse-dais here or anywhere else, you will never have female doctors, and large tracts of the district will never have any medical aid at all until the lucky villagers that have dispensaries begin to help their dispensaries with money. That's how the business stands. The well-to-do, out of gratitude for the nearness of the dispensary, must contribute to enable other places to get their share of medical aid and to enable the women to get some help, too.'

'They certainly need it, Socrates, we all agree there.'

'Then talk it over amongst yourselves. Get your panchayats to discuss it and make up your minds that you will patronize your dispensary in a gentlemanly way and help to spread the benefits of medical aid.'

'But we are none of us too well off, Socrates.'

'Now, stop talking like that. Many of you are in lovely clothes, with European style boots, you smoke cigarettes, you ride bicycles, you go in lorries instead of walking, you have all built new houses since the war—'

'We admit all that, Socrates, but—'

'Then no more buts! Which of all those items of expenditure is more necessary than a nurse-dai, a female doctor or a dispensary?'

'None, of course, Socrates! When you put it that way we are at once convinced, but we have never really thought about the way we spend our money.'

'Then think now. In my domestic budget at home there are two items which can never be reduced and which take precedence of all others.'

'What are they?'

'The doctor and the education of my children. I can economize in all else but not in those items, as it would be

foolish and bad economy to sacrifice the health or education of my family in favour of any other kind of expenditure.'

'That is right, perfectly right, Socrates, but we've never been made to think of these things. We grew up in the army where education and doctors were all provided free, so we've never dreamt of ever spending any money on them.'

'Well, dream of it now, before either they have to close the hospital or put a tax on you.'

'We certainly will, Socrates.'

'And I see that the donation book and subscription book are both blank,' said Socrates, as he turned over the leaves of the books on the dispensary table.

'We have never seen these books before, Socrates.'

'Then look well at them now and start to fill them up. At every wedding, at every social ceremony you spend plenty, make it a point of honour, according to your means, to put a sum into the hospital box.'

'That is a good idea, Socrates. We should never feel it then.'

'One less bomb or cracker, one less tune on the band, one less performing bear, a dish of pilao or two dozen lemonades the less will not matter, but if you all do it we shall soon have a doctor in every village.'

'We will talk it over and our panchayat will discuss it too, Socrates.'

'That is right. Now how much on the average do you spend on a birth in your family ?'

'Oh, anything up to fifty or a hundred rupees, Socrates, according to our position.'

'And how much goes to that most important person the dai ?'

'One rupee if it's a boy and eight annas if it's a girl.'

'Good God ! No wonder your women suffer and die and your children are born dead or maimed for life. Why ! if you would pay the dai five rupees for each child born you would have first-class, clean, educated, trained, high-caste dais in every village. Your sufferings and discomforts will

never cease until you use your brains to teach you how to spend your money.'

'Look here, Socrates,' said one of the lambardars, button-holing the sage as he left the village and quietly drawing him aside, 'I have been thinking over this money business for a long time, and I agree with every word you say, but—'

'Then act on it at once, lambardarji, and the others will soon follow your good lead.'

'Clear one point, Socrates, and I will guarantee that the whole village will follow me. At present when I argue with them they always win on this one point.'

'What is your one point, lambardarji? You are very lucky to have reduced it all to one point only! Most discussions bristle with spiky points and the more they are discussed the more like a porcupine they become!'

'It's this, Socrates. My friends say that the taxes we pay are for schools, bulls and hospitals, and that as we pay our taxes regularly we have paid all we need for these things and are perfectly entitled to enjoy them free of all further payment.'

'Then the only person who should pay for his use of the schools and hospitals is the poor man who by reason of his poverty pays no taxes.'

'Yes,' said the lambardar doubtfully, 'that seems so, but it can't really be right, I should think.'

'Of course not. Strict logic cannot always be applied to these things. God has put us in this world and has given us wealth and brains to use for His glory and the good of our fellow men as well as for our own pleasure and comfort, so that the mere possession of wealth does not entitle us to the exclusive and selfish use of it.'

'Certainly, Socrates, but that argument will not appeal to all of my friends, although I am glad to say that it will appeal to quite a large number.'

'I am very pleased to hear it, lambardarji. As a matter of fact that argument appeals to many more than one is apt to think. In England the King Emperor's eldest son, the Prince of Wales, has been using this argument wherever he goes, and it has been immensely successful.'

‘I wish he would come out here and help us, Socrates.’

‘So do I, but fortunately there is no need for that, much though we should all like it. His appeal is to the whole of his royal father’s great empire, and every word that he says you can use to your friends out here. But I do agree with you that we want a more material argument as well. And fortunately we have one. We can prove easily and conclusively that even taxpayers, who pay their taxes fully and regularly, must contribute according to their means for hospitals, bulls, and every other benefit that is provided by Government and the District Board.’

‘Ah! That is what I want,’ said the lambardar. ‘Tell me that argument at once.’

‘Well, here it is. The District Board and Government have taken all the taxes they dare, and have set up all the hospitals and schools that they can with the money, and there is none left. At the same time the bulls, hospitals and so on that they have provided are nothing like sufficient for all the people who have paid their taxes. There are still many villages miles and miles from the nearest hospital, and many thousands of cows miles and miles from the nearest stud bull.’

‘That is quite true, Socrates.’

‘Then it is obvious that those lucky villages with bulls and hospitals in their immediate neighbourhood have got far more than their share of the good things which their taxes provided, so that either they must contribute more in order to provide all the taxpayers alike with these benefits, or else the hospitals and bulls must be moved round from place to place so that every taxpayer may get an equal return for the taxes he has paid.’

‘I understand, Socrates. Thank you,’ said the lambardar, as he turned to go back to the village. ‘That is quite enough for me and my friends. No one can answer that argument and I am ready to tackle my village and make them “do their bit”, as they used to say during the war.’

‘The war is still on,’ said Socrates, ‘the war against poverty, ignorance, ill-health, and unhappiness in our villages, so that all good men and true must join up and do their bit.. The

call is as clear as ever it was in the Great War. Let us answer it just as the Prince of Wales is asking everyone to answer it in England, by coming forward to help in every way we can.'

XXII

THE BEGINNINGS OF BETTER THINGS

SOCRATES was sitting in the corner of a railway carriage on a line that runs a long way from where he usually lives and works. It was a slow train and stopped at every station, and people kept bustling in with their families and bundles only to bustle out again two stations further on with the same noise and fuss. Socrates did what he could to make things easy for them by handing out bundles and helping the children, but the young man opposite sat stolid and staring and did nothing whatever to help. At last in an excess of haste a tiny girl slipped and fell against the step, in spite of Socrates' helping hand. She burst into tears and Socrates turned on the man opposite and exclaimed in a great rage. 'You lout! You stupid lout! Why couldn't you help the poor child? See how she's bruised her little elbow. If you had given her a hand she needn't have slipped at all, and now her arm will be sore for a week.'

'What's she got to do with me? She's none of mine,' said the young man sullenly.

'Nor of mine either, but that makes no difference. If you fell down in a crowd or someone attacked you with a lathi, you'd be glad enough if someone lent you a helping hand and saved you?'

'Yes, of course I should,' said the young man looking a little sheepish after his first surly answer.

'Then if you expect help from others, you must be ready to give it yourself.'

'But she was only a little girl.'

'Only a little girl! Wasn't your own mother only a little girl once? Wasn't your own wife only a little girl once?'

'Yes, I suppose so.'

'Then hasn't every little girl a claim upon your help if she's in trouble?'

Before the man could answer, another and an older man intervened. He had been staring hard at Socrates since the conversation began and he said suddenly to the young man, 'Be careful what you say, young man. That's Socrates you are talking to.'

'What if he is Socrates! And who's Socrates, I should like to know,' said the young man.

'He's a man who goes about telling people to help each other and to treat their womenfolk with honour, so that by letting that little girl hurt herself you've doubly offended the old man. But what are you doing here, Socrates,' said the older man to the sage, 'and what do you hope to do down in this direction?'

'I travel about sometimes,' said Socrates, 'and I keep my eyes and ears open. I certainly can understand very little of what they say down here, but what I see with my eyes I can understand well enough.'

'Are these Districts much the same as the parts you know, Socrates, or are they very different?'

'It is difficult to say without studying them,' said Socrates. 'Every place has its peculiar difficulties and problems and every place requires to be carefully studied before one can say exactly what are its evils and what are the remedies, and before a programme of reconstruction can be drawn up in which it can be said definitely what must be done first and what must be done second. In one place I was in, the rainfall was very uncertain and the people depended almost solely on it for their living. They were not only desperately poor, but utterly apathetic. Their next meal depended on Providence and they were convinced that they could do nothing to help themselves. "So why bother about anything," they said, and surrendered themselves to fatalism.'

'I expect you managed to do something with them in the end, Socrates ?'

'Yes, but it was mighty hard work. We had a long uphill fight to prove to them that they could do a very great deal to help themselves in spite of the uncertainty of the rain, and in the end I think we did some good. In another place I found that idleness was the curse of the people. Many of their young men went into the army and when they came back they would not take to hard work in the fields. Their stay-at-home brothers saw that they were idle and thought idleness was an honour and so they, too, started to hate work. Meanwhile they had picked up expensive habits in the army and now they are in a fair way to ruin themselves.'

'Can you cure that too, Socrates ?'

'In time, yes, but bad habits take longer to break down than good ones.'

'We all know that, Socrates. It's easier to spoil a good horse than to correct the vices of a bad one,' said a cavalry daffadar who was on his way home on leave.

'And it's easier to pick up bad habits than good ones,' said an old man next to him. 'My boy went to college and in one term he learnt to smoke cigarettes.'

'If that's the only bad habit he has picked up,' said Socrates. 'you and he will both be very lucky.'

'He's a good enough lad in his way,' said his father proudly, 'and still respects his old father and mother.'

'Shâbâsh,' said Socrates, 'there's too little of that nowadays.'

'It's our own fault, I fear,' said the old man. 'If we earn their respect by bringing them up properly, our children will never neglect us.'

'That's quite true,' said Socrates. 'I wish more fathers realized it.'

'We are slack,' said the old man, 'our wives beg us not to be unkind to the boys and we mistake discipline for unkindness and live to be disgraced in our old age.'

'Too true,' said Socrates, 'but your wives would never beg you to spoil their children if they had themselves been educated

and trained. An educated mother is the first to insist on children being properly brought up.'

'Is that so?' asked several.

'Don't I know it,' said Socrates. 'I have several children myself and it's their mother, not I, who trains and disciplines them.'

'That must be so,' said the old man, 'no one is more anxious for her children's welfare than the mother, and once she realizes the need for training she will never neglect it for any motives of false kindness or sentimentality.'

'There can be no real home without a trained and educated mother,' said Socrates. 'A subedar once told me that he had married two wives but his home was still uncomfortable. They were both illiterate and entirely untrained. One trained and literate woman, he said, will make a home and will make a paradise of home. Twenty illiterate and ignorant women will not make a home.'

'It seems that there are some things, Socrates, that are the same wherever you go and some faults common to every place you visit.'

'Certainly,' said Socrates, 'there are differences everywhere, but there is very much that is common to all districts. Wherever the people are poor, they are usually apathetic, depressed and degraded, as poverty has filled them with despair. Wherever the people are idle they are sure to be in mischief, as quarrelling and litigation are the certain companions of idleness.'

'Is there any cure for idleness, Socrates?'

'Work and play,' said Socrates. 'No zamindar should ever be idle; if he cannot find work in his fields—and there is usually ten times as much as he thinks there is, but he shuts his eyes and refuses to look for ways of improving his farm and his home—he must keep poultry or learn some other profitable enterprise.'

'What sort of work do the zamindars usually fail to see?'

'They forget to weed; they forget to embank their fields, they forget to dig out their ponds and spread the valuable earth they dig out as manure on their fields. They forget to

enclose and embank their shāmilāt and banjar and grow trees and grass in them. They forget to collect stuff to burn instead of cowdung. They forget to dig proper manure pits, and forget that to keep their villages clean is to double the manure supply for their fields. Many forget to keep their village roads in order. Those with wells forget that they can grow vegetables and fruit, tobacco, potatoes and sugar cane instead of stupid stuff like wheat.'

'There seems plenty to do, Socrates, for the zamindar?'

'There is, indeed. I haven't mentioned a quarter of the things he can do to spend his time profitably and keep out of mischief. Another thing I find wherever I go and that is WASTE—the zamindar and the villager waste all their resources. Besides the waste of money on litigation and the waste of time that should be spent on improving their farms, I find they waste their sweet water by refusing to dig wells or refusing to grow valuable crops, they waste their money on jewellery and on weddings and all manner of ceremonies, and they waste their manure.'

'How do they waste manure, Socrates? Manure is very precious and every zamindar realizes it.'

'They throw their rubbish anywhere and everywhere and the rain washes it away and the wind blows it away. The people ease themselves everywhere, with the same result.'

'That's quite true, Socrates. It's a very indecent and wasteful habit.'

'And by wasting their manure they waste their health and the health of their children as all this rubbish and night soil just poisons the air and the water and the food of the whole village, and the children have nowhere to play but in the area round the village where all this rubbish and filth lies.'

'I can well believe that,' said the old man, 'all our villages are dirty.'

'Waste then is a common vice,' said Socrates, 'and so is dirt and the indecent custom of using the whole area round the village as a latrine.'

'Well, Socrates, this is very interesting. You have plenty of faults to find with all of us, but if you were asked to say

where we ought to make a beginning what would you put first.'

'Pits,' said Socrates, without a second's hesitation. 'Pits mean clean villages, healthy children and bumper crops and are the beginning of all improvement. While you are dirty you can have no real progress. The very first thing is pits.'

'And then?' asked several.

'The pits must be fitted up as latrines so that another filthy habit may be stopped and you may be not only clean but self-respecting.'

'I agree,' said the old man, 'for our women at least this should be done at once.'

'And for your children,' said Socrates, 'so that they may grow up better than their fathers.'

'Certainly, certainly,' said the old man, 'and what should we do next?'

'Well,' said Socrates, 'the cause of all your troubles is ignorance, and the person really responsible for the home and the bringing up of the children is the mother, so I should put the education of the girls as the next thing. When your wives are trained your homes will be comfortable and happy. Your children will be brought up clean and healthy and ignorance will depart from your village. Education is light and the light must be in the home and the woman is the light of the home, so she must be educated. When your wives are educated and your homes bright and comfortable, you will not want to quarrel and go to law, you will not want to waste money on jewellery and ceremonies, you will not want to waste time. You will be always thinking and working to improve your farm and your home.'

'You are absolutely right, Socrates,' said the old man, 'an educated wife is a blessing from God. She will make the home happy and bright, and our troubles and discontent and discomfort will be at an end. We shall then learn the meaning, of the English expression "Home, Sweet Home". But how are we all to do this great work? A man here and a man there however hard they work will never bring in the millennium.'

'You must work together,' said Socrates.

'How?' asked several.

'You must first have a programme so that you may all work for the same object. It is no use every one doing what he thinks best without reference to his fellow-workers.'

'But you will give us the programme, Socrates.'

'No, I certainly won't. I can merely make occasional suggestions. I cannot draw up the programme.'

'Then who will?'

'You must work it out yourselves.'

'How?'

'You must have a council or association of all the leaders of the district and all who wish well of the country and use that to thrash out your programme of reconstruction.'

'Who will appoint the members, Socrates?'

'No one. They will appoint themselves by paying the small annual subscription required to make the society a living body. And as the society makes its programme of work, so all the members and all the officials and departments of Government will work together to carry it out.'

'That is very practical,' said the daffadar. 'We shall work like one big army, infantry in line in front, artillery firing from behind, cavalry going round the flanks, and sappers blowing up the enemies' fortifications.'

'Exactly,' said Socrates. 'Rural reconstruction is a combined movement. A plan is made—all help to make it—and when it is made every one in his own way helps to carry it out. It is a general attack on the forces of dirt and ignorance and apathy.'

'But what are we to do in each village? We are so jealous and distrustful of each other that if any man tries to do anything, everyone else immediately attacks him and spoils his work.'

'That is quite true,' said Socrates, 'and that is why the springs of sweet water in the hills all run to waste, and why the shâmilât lands are denuded of all grass and trees.'

'Then what is the cure, Socrates?'

'Co-operation is the cure for all your evils. You can have a co-operative society for every single item of the programme of

village uplift or for all of them together, and the Co-operative Department will be only too pleased to help you to start them, if you really mean to begin work. But don't go and bother them if you are not serious about it, and do not mean immediate business.'

' We are serious enough, Socrates. We have lived too long in dirt and discomfort.'

' Shâbâsh. And another way you can set to work is by village panchayats. If you can agree amongst yourselves to elect a panchayat, the panchayat will not only settle your quarrels and disputes but will see to your pit-digging, to the fitting of the pits as latrines, it will see about the education of your girls and all the other things you must do. It will organize games to keep your young men out of mischief, and it will keep you all up to the mark when you get slack and forget your resolve to uplift your home and village.'

' There are plenty of villages where panchayats could be formed,' said the old man.

' And in every village and hamlet co-operative societies can be formed,' said Socrates, ' and in your schools the whole programme of uplift can be taught and worked out in practice so that not only will your children grow up to better things but they will go out singly and in parties to teach their parents all about the new village life. The boy scouts will, of course, be your greatest allies.'

' They are already beginning to busy themselves in our villages.'

' Splendid,' said Socrates, ' I am delighted to hear it. They are wonderful people and once they begin to help you, they will soon brighten village life. Well! I see my station has come, and I must get down. Good-bye all of you, and good luck to your campaign of village uplift,' and Socrates alighted from the train and disappeared into the crowd on the platform.

XXIII

CONSOLIDATION

‘WHERE shall I find your father?’ asked Socrates of the lambardar’s son as he arrived rather unexpectedly at the chaupal.

‘He’s ploughing in Shahwali field,’ said the boy.

‘No, he isn’t,’ said Socrates. ‘I have just come that way and there was no sign of him anywhere. I did see about half a kachcha bigha of freshly ploughed land there. Someone had evidently begun ploughing and then remembered his hookah and come away.’

‘No, that’s the whole field,’ said the boy.

‘Is that all the land he owns?’ asked Socrates.

‘Oh dear no! He’s got fifty fields, I mean fifty bighas.’

‘Then where is he?’ asked Socrates. ‘He’s nowhere near his fields, as I know for myself.’

‘I’m sure he is,’ said the boy, ‘as I saw him take his plough with him, when he left home this morning.’

‘But I tell you I’ve just passed his fields.’

‘No you haven’t,’ said the boy, ‘he’s got fields everywhere.

‘Don’t be silly,’ said Socrates. ‘No one keeps fields everywhere.’

‘We do, at any rate,’ said the boy. ‘Father has fifty bighas and they are in fifty fields and the fields are scattered all over the area of the village.’

‘Well, I never!’ said Socrates, ‘more lunacy! When shall I get to the end of the follies and stupidities of you zamindars?’

The boy looked very downcast and almost ready to cry, but Socrates patted him on the back and said, ‘Never mind, my boy, it’s not your fault, nor mine either. It’s just another of the old customs we have got to try and change.’

‘Oh! do try and get it put right,’ said the boy. ‘I took father’s dinner to him yesterday and I went from field to field trying to find him, and after wandering for an hour I met

another boy and we started playing and a dog ran away with father's dinner. I didn't dare go on with no dinner so I ran home crying, and when father came back he was so angry I had to hide till he'd had his smoke and felt better.'

'Poor boy,' said Socrates. 'I dare say you don't know where all his fields are.'

'No, I don't, and when the bajra is high I often can't find him at all. One day last spring father sent me to scare birds from his field down near the banni, and two hours later I was shouting away merrily and cracking my sling when up came father all hot and angry, and before I could ask him why or wherefore he had boxed my ears and knocked me off my perch. When I had stopped crying I asked him what I had done wrong, and he said, " Didn't I send you to scare birds from my field ? " I said " Yes, and there isn't a bird in the field." " Isn't there ! " he shouted, " I have just been there and found a hundred parrots biting off the heads of the corn." " But this is your field, father," I said. " No, it isn't, silly," and he nearly boxed my ears again. " This is Nathu's field that you have been keeping clear of birds—the cursed fellow who ran me in for letting my cattle graze on his gram last year. May the birds eat his crops for evermore ! " '

'Fancy scaring birds from the crops of your father's best enemy ! No wonder he was annoyed, poor man ! And I have no doubt the cattle trespass case was all because the fields were so mixed up together.'

'Why, some of father's fields are so small and so far away that he cannot plough them at all, and if he does the birds or the deer or other people's cattle eat all the crops.'

'Of course they do ! Let me see, he has five sons, hasn't he ? '

'Yes, and we all scare birds or tend cattle in one field or another.'

'None at school ? '

'No. How can we go, with all these fields to look after ? '

'Of course you can't. If all your father's fields were together one of you could tend the cattle and all the rest go to school.'

'I suppose we could.'

'And if there was some sort of fence round the field you could all of you go to school. Your cattle could not stray out then and other people's cattle could not eat your crops.'

'How splendid that would be! I hate loafing about looking after cattle.'

'And precious little good it does you, either,' said Socrates

'Why! one of father's fields is just by the road, and half the crops are always eaten by other people's cattle as they are driven past.'

'We must talk to the elders about this,' said Socrates. 'Until each man's fields are thrown together in one plot he can't farm properly and he can't fence in his land and he can't send his children to school. When his fields are together he can fence them, plough long furrows and plant big fields of crops. He can sink a well to water them and grow good crops. He can keep his cattle away from the others when diseases are about, and he can send his children to school. His family will always know where to find him and he can in time make his home on his well and live in peace and health.'

Just then the lambardar came up and said, 'What about cattle thieves?'

'They won't be able to do anything at all when you fence your fields,' said Socrates. 'They'll have to drive their cattle along the roads instead of across the fields, and it will be very easy to stop them.'

'I believe you're right,' said the lambardar, 'but how is it to be done?'

'Why, when you want to do it,' said Socrates, 'the Co-operative Department will send a man to explain everything and get you all to agree and then he will redistribute your shares in big lumps and you will start again as your forefathers did when they founded the village. The bank people do this work mighty well. They go on talking and persuading until every one agrees and then there is a big entry in the village papers and the work is done.'

'But our village is full of parties, and someone or other is sure to disagree and spoil it all!'

'Then you must get a law passed,' said Socrates, 'that when three-quarters of the people want it, it shall be done.'

'But what about the last quarter who don't want it?'

'When they built that railway over there, did they wait till every one agreed to sell his land?'

'No, indeed they didn't.'

'Well, isn't this lumping together of your fields as useful as a railway?'

'Certainly it is.'

'Then why should we all have to wait for a few obstinate objectors to agree before we put our land right?'

'No, it hardly seems necessary,' said the lambardar, 'now you put it that way.'

'Well, get on with it,' said Socrates, 'and next time don't box your son's— —but an imploring look from the lambardar's son stopped him finishing his sentence.

XXIV

A GOOD TURN

I HAVE just seen a very sad thing,' said Socrates to the patrol leader as he greeted him outside the village school.

'Can we help?' said the patrol leader, at once on the alert to do his daily good turn.

'You can, and you can't,' answered Socrates.

'That's a queer answer, Socrates,' said the patrol leader, and he turned and shouted to his patrol: 'Come along, you fellows, Socrates has got something to tell us.'

'How do you make that out?' asked Socrates, as the scouts came dashing up and fell in behind their leader.

'Of course you have,' said the patrol leader. 'You wouldn't give a funny answer like that to a question if you hadn't got something in your mind you wanted us to know about.'

VACCINATOR

GO AWAY
YOU CRUEL
MAN!

YES, BARBERJI
I'LL HAVE TWELVE
HOLES IN
EACH EAR

MOTHERLY
LOVE

'Well, you're right for once,' said Socrates. 'I have something I very much want to tell you. I have just been to a school where they try and teach blind boys to make a living.'

'There are plenty of blind people here, Socrates.'

'Yes, isn't it terrible! Blind people in every village, and, worst of all, blind children. They'll never be able to play games, they'll never see the mustard fields in spring. They'll never see the flowers in the school garden. They'll never be able to look for birds' nests—it nearly made me cry to see them in the school! One of them was fumbling with a piece of wood and trying to plane it smooth. There they were, half a dozen of them, very slowly, very patiently, trying to train their fingers to take the place of their lost eyes. Their teacher was a blind man, too. They work very slowly, and for a long time they have to be given blunt tools so that they shan't cut themselves. As their fingers get less clumsy they can be trusted with sharper tools. Isn't it terribly sad? And to think that they need never have been blind at all!'

'What, Socrates! They needn't have been blind at all! How could they have been saved?'

'Easily, boys. Half of them are blind because they were never vaccinated and—'

'We are all properly vaccinated here, Socrates. We can't stay in the troop, or even at school, if we are not.'

'Splendid! And the other half are blind because their mothers never washed their eyes properly when they were small, and they got dirt into them playing in their filthy villages.'

'This village is dirty enough, Socrates, in spite even of our efforts.'

'Stick to it, lads. You may not be able to do much yet, but if you hate dirt and do your best to clean things, your parents will in time do so too, and when you grow up you will be able to do still more.'

'That we are doing, Socrates. But you started by saying that we could and we couldn't help. Explain that now, will you, please?'

' Well, you can't help those already blind except by the little kind deeds I know you are already doing. But you can stop others getting blind by seeing to it that every boy and girl in the village is properly vaccinated and re-vaccinated.'

' That we will do, Socrates.'

' And by bringing your little sisters to school so that when they grow up they will get their own children vaccinated, and will always keep their children's eyes clean, and know how to use a few simple medicines when anything goes wrong with them.'

XXV

WORMS AND BEETLES

' WHAT's that dung-hill doing in the middle of that crop ? ' asked Socrates, pointing to a dark-coloured mound as he rode through the village crops.

' That's not a dung-hill, that's a man weeding.'

' I'm sorry,' said Socrates, ' the men of most nations stand up to work and I thought that motionless lump must be a dunghill.'

Just then the man stood up and saluted. He was a fine big ex-soldier.

' That's no dung-hill, indeed,' said Socrates, ' but why does he waste all that height and strength and weight by squatting on the ground to work ? '

' We always work squatting down, Socrates.'

' Nearer the beloved hookah, I suppose,' said Socrates

' No, that's not the reason.'

' I'll bet it is,' said Socrates. ' But what is the reason, then ? '

' The work is only done with our arms and so it's easier and more restful to sit down to work.'

‘Easier? More restful! And the hookah at your elbow! Of course it’s more restful to work with one-quarter of one’s strength but when work is to be done why not do it well and quickly and then go and do something else?’

‘But we do do it well.’

‘In another country if a man squatted to weed he would soon be begging his bread.’

‘Why?’

‘Because you cannot do one-quarter of the work sitting down than that you can do standing up.’

‘How is that? It’s only arm work.’

‘Do you “put the weight” in your regiment?’

‘Yes, and I was champion for many years.’

‘You sat down to put it, I suppose?’

‘Don’t be silly, Socrates.’

‘But it’s only arm work, isn’t it?’

‘It may be arm work, but you’ve got to use the whole strength of the legs and back to enable the arm to develop its maximum force.’

‘And so with all other work,’ said Socrates, ‘whether it’s hoeing weeds or carpentering or any other work. If you want to work with ease and skill and speed you must stand up to do it. Get a bench for your carpentering and see the difference in speed and finish. Get a long-handled hoe and see how quickly you’ll do this field and how much better the work will be done. Stand up and be men, don’t squat like worms and beetles!’

Wherever Socrates went he found carpenters, smiths, gardeners, reapers, every one squatting to work.

‘Worms and beetles, all of you,’ he said. ‘Get up! Use your backs and thighs for your work. Don’t waste three-quarters of your strength by squatting on the ground. By standing up you can add to the strength of your arms and so make your arms work much more skilfully. When you sit down you cannot use the whole strength of your arms and your work is uncertain, untidy and unskilful. For want of strength and weight behind your arms you have to put strain into the work and so the result is poor and slovenly. Have you ever used a chaff-cutting machine?’

'Yes, I have,' said a zamindar, 'but it's not much saving, as it takes two men to turn the handle and one to feed the cherri into the cutter.'

'So I've noticed, and yet my wife can turn it with one hand, and even my eleven-year-old son can work the machine.'

'How can that be possible, Socrates?'

'I have wondered myself for a long time, but I think I understand it now. The reason why you find it so hard and we find it so easy must be that as you do all your work squatting down you have never learnt to use your backs and thighs to help the work of your arms, whereas we always work standing up and so get the best value out of all our muscles. As soon as you take to the habit of standing up to work, you will have no more bother with a chaff-cutter than my little boy has.'

In the next village Socrates came to he found a lot of boys throwing stones at a mark. 'Now sit down and throw,' said Socrates. They all laughed at him.

'Why do you laugh?' he asked. 'You only throw with your arms. Why not sit down and enjoy a little ease for the rest of your body?'

But they all laughed again.

'Very well,' said Socrates, 'next time I catch you sitting down to weed or to do any farm work, or to work in wood or iron, I'll give you something with my stick that you'll remember when you want to sit down to work.'

'All right, Socrates, if you can catch us!' said the boys, rapidly slipping behind a cart that was standing near by.

'I'm not so old as all that yet,' said Socrates. 'But listen to me, villagers! The only men who may sit down are the babu and the tailor, and the watch-maker and jeweller. Every one else works standing up. Is that agreed?' asked Socrates.

'Yes,' said the villagers, 'you are right, but it's another dear old custom damned.'

'Then don't let me see any more worms or beetles in the workshop or in the fields or in the farmyard, nor any more mobile dung-hills either!'

VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

' You are for ever telling us villagers we are idle and should take up cottage industries in our spare time, Socrates,' said the lambardar as the sage took his seat under the pipal tree where the elders were sitting and smoking in the evening.

' Yes, I am,' said Socrates. ' Farming as done by you people does not fill your whole time, and the prices you get for your produce nowadays are insufficient for your livelihood. So both to earn a better living and to keep you from mischief when you are idle you require village industries.'

' You also say that Satan is always looking for idle people, Socrates, don't you ? '

' I am not the only one who says that,' said Socrates, ' that has been said, and truly said, for many thousands of years. But you need not trouble about industries in this village, at all events.'

' Why so, Socrates ? '

' Well, I have seen several splendid industries as I have been coming along.'

' Have you, indeed, Socrates ? I am glad you appreciate our effort to take your advice. But what in particular have you noticed this evening that is new in our village ? '

' I did not say they were new, lambardarji, nor that you had taken my advice in establishing them.'

' Well, what were they, anyway, Socrates ? '

' There is one good industry going on under this pipal tree.'

' Whatever can that be, Socrates ? '

' Why, the celebrated "Village Smoke and Mischief Factory" of course ! '

' What do you mean, Socrates ? We are only sitting here smoking and discussing the day's events.'

'Exactly! You admit that you are manufacturing smoke, and is not all the mischief and trouble in the village hatched over the hookah?'

'I suppose you are right, Socrates. Then you were only fooling us when you said we had industries?'

'I was never more serious in my life, lambardarji.'

'But what real industries did you see, then?'

'Your womenfolk have two great industries, fuel-making and corn-grinding. These certainly fill up their time, but they would be busy enough without them. These occupations merely keep them from looking after their children and their homes, and so far from improving your livelihood the fuel-making industry very much reduces the out-turn of your fields by burning up your manure supply, while the corn-grinding industry prevents your wives from doing housework, making and mending clothes, and thereby saving you expense and keeping your family healthy and comfortable.'

'Come, Socrates, we have heard all that before. Did you really see any industries in our village?'

'I saw several disease factories, several fly factories, which are another kind of disease factory of course, and mosquito factories. Yes, you have many busy industries in and around your village.'

'What do you mean this time, Socrates?'

'Well, those pools of dirty water all round your village—what else do they do besides breeding mosquitoes?'

'I can't say they do any good, Socrates.'

'And your heaps of muck are the best possible breeding places for flies, and flies produce disease, do they not?'

'You say so, Socrates, I believe.'

'And are not your windowless houses excellent harbours of disease?'

'You are for ever making fun of us, Socrates.'

'If I were to be serious about your foolish ways I should go mad, I think, lambardarji. So I try and make fun of you, in the hope that one day you will put these things right.'

'Thank you, Socrates, but we are slow to change our ways.'

'Would you like to have a law to compel you to dig pits?'

' I believe that would be the best in the long run, Socrates. Then you and I and those who want these things done would be able to rest, instead of going round persuading and arguing and abusing those who are too idle or too stupid to do them.'

' There would still be no rest, lambardarji, as pits are but the beginning. There is so much to be done to make your villages healthy and happy that there would not be rest for fifty Socrates for a hundred years to come.'

' We are very contented to remain as we are, Socrates. It is only you who fret and worry about us.'

' Your contentment is the worst part of it, lambardarji.'

' But why can't you leave us alone, Socrates ? '

' I cannot because I have seen other countries, and I see much trouble coming to your country if you don't mend your ways in time. The old ways were all very well in the old days, but everything has changed and you must change too if you wish your children to be happy and contented. Those who have once been to school and have moved about in the world and had their eyes opened, cannot go on living in the conditions in which you unschooled and untravelled elders are content to live. That is why I am so anxious about the future of your villages.'

So saying, Socrates moved off and left the elders to chew on what he had said. The pipal tree under which they sat was on the edge of the village and Socrates had not left the village fifty yards behind him before he called back to the lambardar that he had forgotten to mention the most important industry of all. The elders under the pipal tree had some difficulty in making out his words at that distance, but they gathered that he was complaining of the smell round the village, and the last words they could catch were—' Scent factory !'

SOCRATES was discussing some new method of farming with the villagers and several of them kept saying that it was undoubtedly useful. 'Why do you keep using that silly word "useful"?' asked Socrates.

'Because it is useful, of course,' said the villagers.

'But even if it is useful,' said Socrates, 'that's no argument in favour of adopting it.'

'Why not?' asked the villagers, 'surely that's the best argument of all.'

'It may be the best argument for me,' said Socrates, 'but it's certainly not the best for you villagers.'

'Why not?' asked the villagers. 'You are always saying that we are old-fashioned and you are always making all sorts of accusations against us. But surely you are not going to say now that we are careless of our own profit?'

'I am,' said Socrates. 'The last thing you people ever think about is the actual value of any new thing which I suggest.'

'Nonsense,' said the villagers. 'We are poor people and only too quick to see whether there is any profit in anything you suggest.'

'You surprise me,' said Socrates, 'and I'm afraid you're quite wrong. The last thing you ever think of is the profit to be got out of any change. Why, if you start thinking of profit you will very soon lose your caste and be turned out of your brotherhood and find no matches for your children when the time comes to marry them.'

'How do you make all that out, Socrates?'

'Well, the moment I tell you to use your well to grow vegetables for your profit, you tell me you're no māli, and if I tell you to make cloth for your profit in your spare time you say you're no weaver. Whenever I mention profit you reject my suggestion with contempt.'

'Yes, I am afraid you are right there, Socrates. We certainly prefer caste and such like considerations to profit.'

'And when I wanted you to educate your little girls so that they would be able to run your homes better you said it was against your religion.'

'Yes, but we soon learnt from those of us who had studied religion that this was quite wrong and religion never forbade girls education.'

'But still you made the excuse, and being a religious man myself I was silent as I never yet asked a man to do anything contrary to his religion.'

'Quite correct, Socrates.'

'And when I said, "Save your money and don't put ear-rings on your children," you said you could not break your custom or go contrary to what your womenfolk said.'

'I'm afraid that's true also.'

'And when I wanted you to cut down the waste of money on weddings you preferred the good opinion of your friends and neighbours and relations to considerations of profit.'

'Any more, Socrates ?'

'Plenty more. You won't use a new kind of plough for fear of being laughed at in the village.'

'Never,' said a lambardar.'

'Perfectly true,' said a subedar. 'We are all of us shy about trying new things for fear of their being a failure and our looking foolish, and hearing people say, "I told you so."'

'And when I told you to build banks and make walls round your hilly land you said it was too much trouble and too much hard work.'

'We never said that,' said the subedar.

'Not in so many words, perhaps, but that was obviously what was in your thoughts.'

'Very probably, I fear,' said the lambardar.

'The beloved hookah again ! And finally when I said, "Sow 8A wheat," you said it would cost more.'

'Well, so it does,' said an ex-soldier,

'There you are. The seed will cost eight annas an acre extra and the crop will be worth several rupees an acre more.'

and yet you refuse to buy 8A and then say you put considerations of profit before everything else.'

' It does look as if we don't attach much weight to questions of profit in deciding whether we will follow your advice or not.'

' I should think not ! Profit comes absolutely last. First comes an incorrect interpretation of religion, then custom, then the opinion of your womenfolk, friends and relations, then public opinion in the village, then laziness, then the possible first cost and then probably lots more things that you can think of yourselves. If all these things are satisfactorily settled, you are ready to consider the benefit to be derived from a change ; or rather, if all these objections are satisfactorily answered, you may possibly condescend to carry out a scheme which is obviously profitable to you, otherwise you will refuse to have anything whatever to do with it.'

' We are not all of us quite as bad as that, Socrates, but undoubtedly what you say applies to most of us.'

' That's so,' said Socrates, ' a few of your bolder spirits and more energetic and sensible people——'

' ——ex-soldiers, for instance,' said the subedar.

' By no means always, Subedar Sahib,' said Socrates. ' Some of you ex-soldiers are so old-fashioned and obstinate that I believe you would go on fighting with bows and arrows rather than use rifles if you got the chance.'

The villagers laughed heartily at this, and Socrates went on, ' What it comes to is that you all hate change and any excuse is good enough to refuse to touch a new thing however profitable it obviously is.'

' That's about it,' said the subedar.

' There are, fortunately, a few sensible people among you, however,' said Socrates, ' who are ready to try new things, and the rest of you will slowly, slowly, follow them. But until you as a whole are ready to size up the value of any suggestion of mine, or of anyone else's, on its merits without reference to all these other bogies which I've just shown to you, your progress will be extremely slow and you'll always be far behind the times and in consequence poverty-stricken and uncomfortable.'

XXVIII

DIRT IS POVERTY

SOCRATES had been wandering through a large number of villages, and looking at the way the people lived and farmed and how they brought up their children.

The villagers knew he was coming and in some villages they scattered earth over all the heaps of filth and rubbish so that Socrates should think that everything was clean and sweet.

'Come, come,' said Socrates to the lambardar, 'do you really think you can deceive Socrates as easily as that? Was this done yesterday or this morning?'

'This morning, Socrates,' admitted the lambardar, smiling 'I see you are not going to be taken in in this simple way.'

'How can I when I am a villager myself? But who told you to hide your filth in this way?'

'The zaildar did, Socrates.'

'Then tell the zaildar he's making a fool of me. I never told anyone to throw earth on top of their rubbish heaps. That is sheer waste of time. To-morrow your village will be as dirty as ever. Either dig pits and throw everything into them, or, if you prefer it, live and die in filth. Don't tidy up just for my visit, as I am too old a bird to be caught with that kind of chaff.'

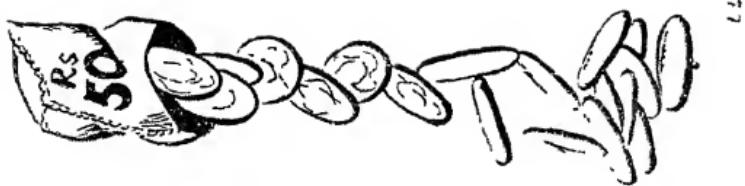
'Then we had better dig pits, I think, Socrates.'

'Well, anyway, if you do you will certainly get far better crops than you do now and the extra yield you will get by using good manure, combined with what you will get by using good seed and Coimbatore canes and by sowing your cotton in lines, will increase your crops by about fifty per cent.'

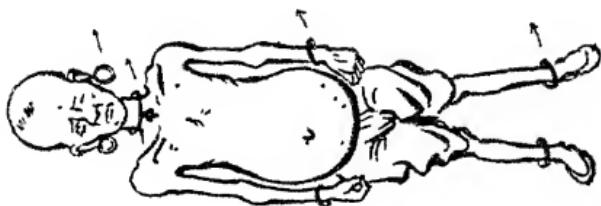
'I believe you are right, Socrates,' said the lambardar, 'as I have seen the result myself of using properly kept manure and of sowing "farm seed."

'Then add to that benefit the reduction you will gain in the sickness and ailments which are caused by the filth you now live in—and seem to enjoy—'

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'Don't, Socrates. It's ignorance, not pleasure, that makes us careless of our health.'

'Whatever it is, it's very unpleasant. Anyway, the saving in sickness added to the savings in expenditure on jewellery, litigation and ceremonies will enable you to carry on in spite of the low prices.'

'I hope you are right, Socrates.'

'The only way to test it is to try it out.'

'We will, Socrates. Times are too hard now for us to sit idle and just talk about our troubles.'

'Let me suggest that you throw all rubbish at all times into your pits, but one morning a week have a general clean-up before you wash and change and go to your weekly prayers.'

'That's a good idea, Socrates, as we can hardly hope for our prayers to be accepted when they ascend from a village in the foul condition ours is in at present.'

'But when you've cleaned up your village, don't be like the zamindar who went to heaven—'

'What's that story, Socrates?'

'Well, he arrived in heaven all right by some fluke, but he seemed very restless and unhappy there and none of the attendants could discover why, and he didn't seem to know, himself. He just wandered about as if he was lost, and he moped and pined for he knew not what. This went on for some time till by chance one day he was standing by when the attendants opened one of the trap-doors in the floor of heaven. The trap-door happened to be right over this zamindar's old village, and the odour that came up from his old home nearly knocked the attendants down.'

'Come, Socrates, it's not as bad as that.'

'It's worse, only you people are so used to it that you don't notice it. Well, the attendants fell back in a faint but our zamindar friend was seen standing over the open trap-door with mouth and nostrils wide open, happiness written all over his face, and muttering to himself, "This is the first time I've felt really at home since I arrived in heaven."

XXIX

BOYS AND GIRLS

SOCRATES was one day passing through a village with several zamindars when he saw the school some distance away.

'I must go there,' he said, 'I always like to look at schools.'

'What is the use of that, Socrates?' asked several.

'Well, whenever I ask you to do anything new or profitable you always tell me that you are too old to change your ways, so now I have taken to visiting the schools to see that they teach the new things to the children. I am always hoping that when the children grow up they will follow my ways, instead of sticking to their fathers' ways.'

'Oh, very well, then,' said the villagers, 'go there if you must.'

And go they did, but Socrates only just glanced at the children and came away looking rather annoyed.

'Well, you have seen the school, Socrates, but even now you don't seem satisfied.'

'No, of course not! There were only boys there.'

'Who else did you expect to be there, Socrates?'

'Why, girls of course! Surely it's far more important to send girls to school than boys?'

'Well, you are a funny man, Socrates! Fancy wanting to send girls to school in preference to boys!'

Socrates said nothing in answer to that, and they continued their walk through the village. Presently they came across a child—a very dirty little boy, with nose running and clothes torn and dirty. He wore gold ear-rings, and on his wrists were silver bangles. He was marked with small-pox too, and altogether looked very neglected, although he seemed quite happy and was cheerfully playing on a heap of muck along with other little children, both boys and girls, as grubby as himself.

'Poor little wretches,' muttered Socrates to himself, but several of the villagers heard him.

'Why do you say that, Socrates?' asked several. 'These children are just the same as we were, and many of their fathers are well-to-do, as zamindars go nowadays.'

'That's just the trouble,' said Socrates, 'I want them to be better than you were. The whole world has changed, and unless we change with it we shall be left high and dry—ruined and lost, in other words.'

'Well, what's the matter with them, Socrates?' asked a zamindar.

'Oh, nothing at all! I only noticed the boy over there was marked with small-pox, which means that he was never properly vaccinated, although he wears ear-rings and bangles.'

'His mother wouldn't let him be vaccinated,' said his father, 'and it was she who insisted on making holes in his ears, and giving him trinkets to wear.'

'It is the mothers then, is it, that control the little children and settle whether they shall wear ear-rings, or be vaccinated, whether they shall run about clean or dirty, and wear clean and tidy clothes or torn and dirty ones, and whether they shall play on the muck heap, or in a nice clean place?'

'Yes, the mothers look to these things, we men are too busy—'

'Smoking!'

'No, farming, Socrates.'

'You men then do not approve of such things as ear-rings, I suppose?'

'Oh, no!' said several promptly, 'we dislike ornaments, it's our womenfolk who insist on having them.'

'And you believe in vaccination?'

'Yes,' said one or two, but with less certainty.

'Why is that?'

'Oh, we know better, Socrates, nowadays, we have been to school.'

'It is education then that makes you wise and sensible, is it?'

'Yes, of course!'

‘But didn’t you laugh at me just now for suggesting that the girls should go to school, and yet now you say it is the mothers who are responsible for these important things, and that education makes people wise and sensible?’

‘Yes, we did, I fear, Socrates; as usual we had not thought it out in the way you do.’

‘It is obvious then, if you want clean and healthy children, you must send the girls to school so as to learn all the new things.’

‘Yes, but there’s no girls’ school here, Socrates. What are we to do?’

‘That is a difficulty, I admit,’ said Socrates, ‘for people who are so particular as you. Who are those playing with the little boys over there?’

‘Why, little girls, of course!’

‘Oh, really! I thought they played in a separate place!’

‘No, of course they don’t, Socrates, how could you think that? We are all one big family here.’

‘And they eat together—little girls and little boys?’

‘Yes, certainly!’

‘And wash together, and do everything else together?’

‘Yes, of course!’

‘And no one looks after them?’

‘No, the women are too busy to be following them about all day.’

‘And yet when it comes to education, where they will be under the supervision of a reliable and responsible master, the boys and the girls must have separate schools. Surely it’s you that are funny people, not Socrates?’

‘I’m afraid we are blind slaves of custom, Socrates, and never think these things out for ourselves.’

‘Then do let me beg you to begin using your brains to think things out before it is too late, and you are all ruined together.’

XXX

NEIGHBOURS

' I HAVE a quarrel with you, Socrates,' said the subedar, as soon as he saw Socrates coming into the village.

' Fire away, Subedar Sahib, let's hear all about it.'

' Perhaps you remember telling us to keep what you were pleased to call "improved poultry"?'

' Yes, I certainly do, and I still tell you to keep them, but I hardly thought a fellow like you would take any notice of what I said.'

' Well, I did, but I'll never do it again.'

' Why? Why? Let's hear what happened first, before you make all these terrible resolves.'

' They all died last week.'

' Bad luck. Did a fox kill them?

' Fox, indeed! This is India, not England, Socrates.'

' Well, how did they die? Perhaps you ate them all up for a wedding feast!'

' Don't fool me, Socrates. I don't know why they died, but what I do know is that they fell sick one after the other and in a week they were all dead—and I was just beginning to make a nice thirty rupees a month out of them. Never again, Socrates. You've let me in properly this time.'

' I expect you kept them in a dirty, dark hut and—'

' No, Socrates, I did everything most carefully that I was told to do.'

' Well done! But tell me this. Did the other fowls in the village die?'

' Yes, they died too.'

' Well, how can you blame me if an epidemic spreads to your fowls from the village fowls?'

' What's the good of keeping good fowls, then?'

' None, I must say, if you allow yourself to be surrounded with fowls that are kept badly. You know well enough how

difficult it is to stop plague or fever or any other disease spreading from the bazaar into the regiments ? '

' Yes, I know that well enough. The bazaar is put out of bounds and everything is done, but even then we get cases in the lines.'

' So with fowls, Subedar Sahib. However well you keep yours it is very hard to keep out disease if every one round you is keeping theirs badly. Why, crows and other birds flying from one fowl-yard to another are quite enough to spread disease.'

' Well, what's the remedy ? It's obviously useless trying to keep good fowls, Socrates.'

' Not a bit. You've got to tackle your neighbours and get them to keep their fowls properly—and while they are about it they might just as well keep good ones.'

' That'll take a long time, Socrates.'

' So it may, but it's the only way, Subedar Sahib. And what's more, it's the only way with everything else too.'

' What do you mean, Socrates ? '

' Well, however much you vaccinate your children they will still be liable to small-pox while your neighbours' children continue unvaccinated and keep the disease going in the village. However well you dig your pits and clean your premises your children will still be liable to get sores and bad eyes from the flies bred in other people's rubbish, and will still get diarrhoea and dysentery from the dirt blowing about the village and settling in the food and water.'

' Then it's no good my trying to live the better village life at all, Socrates ? '

' It's every good, Subedar Sahib, but your life will not be altogether better till you have persuaded your neighbours to do the same.'

' But I'm no preacher, Socrates, like you.'

' Preacher be blowed ! It's just stark common sense. My neighbour's dirt and disease and laziness and stupidity make me just as uncomfortable and just as liable to disease and misfortune as my own used to make me, and therefore when I clean up my premises and take to better ways myself I am

jolly well going to make my neighbours do the same. You needn't call it high-sounding names, Subedar Sahib ; call it enlightened self-interest which makes me insist on my neighbours raising their standards, so as to enable me to keep my own standard high.'

' That's an ingenious way of trying to make me do your work, Socrates, I must say ! '

' Not a bit. When your neighbour's thistle-seed blows into your fields don't you go and have a row with him and tell him to cut his weeds down before they are ripe so as to avoid spoiling your fields ? '

' Yes, of course I do.'

' Well, can't you see that the same thing applies to everything else ? You can see the thistle-down blowing with the wind and so you are ready to do something about it, but just because you can't see the germs of diseases blowing about, you think other people's diseases don't matter. If your neighbour kept a really bad bull and let it roam among your cows wouldn't you object ? '

' Of course I should.'

' Well, apply that principle to everything in life. Don't let your neighbours live an inferior life and so spoil yours. Go for them and teach them better ways so that your own standard may remain high. Why, even the sight of your neighbour's wife wearing too much jewellery may make your wife catch the craze.'

' Certainly it may, Socrates.'

' And the sight of your neighbour running a lawsuit, or holding an expensive wedding-feast may tempt you to do the same.'

' That's so, Socrates—still more work for us, I suppose, you insatiable reformer,' said the subedar with a sigh, ' but I can quite see that we must get on with it, if we wish to live in peace and happiness.'

' Certainly you must. In a civilized world you cannot be blind to what your neighbour does. As it is written in a very ancient eastern book, " No man liveth unto himself." '

XXXI

BUILDERS

'Good morning, Headmaster Sahib,' said Socrates as he entered the village school one morning. 'I had no idea there was a school here until I turned the corner and saw the buildings and heard the buzz of boys saying their lessons. What nice buildings—'

'How should you know there was a school here until you saw it, Socrates ?'

'What a question, masterji !' said Socrates. 'How long have you been in charge of this school ?'

'Six years, come next harvest holidays, Socrates, but I was here before that for some years as an assistant.'

'How terrible ! Years and years in this place and nothing to show for it, nothing the better for your being here !'

'What do you mean, Socrates ? Why should my being here make any difference to the village ? I am the schoolmaster, not a builder or—'

'That's just what you are, masterji. You are a builder, every day a builder, that is if you are doing your true duty as a schoolmaster.'

'How can I be a builder, Socrates ? You are for ever telling us schoolmasters new things, but a builder ! That's something quite new !'

'You are quite right, masterji. I am for ever telling you masters new things as I consider you the most important people in the country to-day.'

'How so, Socrates ? We are certainly not paid as if we were the most important people in the country !'

'Perhaps not, but when you hear what I have to say I daresay you will agree that you have not all of you yet accepted the position I want you to occupy, and to which, high pay or low pay, you must strive to attain.'

'What is that, Socrates ?'

‘ You schoolmasters are the builders of India. As you build now so will India be in the years to come. The children of to-day will be the citizens of to-morrow, and their training is entirely in your hands.’

‘ But that is the same in every country, isn’t it, Socrates ? ’

‘ It is far more true in your country, as in your country the mothers of the children are very rarely themselves educated, and often the fathers are not either, and there are far fewer agencies and organizations, as we call them, here to help with the upbringing of the young. Your responsibility is therefore complete, and that is why I hope to be able to discover from what I see as I come into a village whether there is a school in it or not.’

‘ What do you hope to see that will tell you there is a school in our village, Socrates ? ’

‘ Well, to start with, schooling is useless without health, and there can be no health without cleanliness— ’

‘ Our children are clean enough, Socrates, ever since you told us when you visited my last school.’

‘ Well done, but there can be no health until the village is also clean and that means pits. Health also means windows, and I look for signs of new windows having been opened in the houses as the result of the school being here. I also look to see if the little girls are still neglected, and playing in the dirt, instead of being at school with their brothers. A school should also mean better farming, and I look for signs of better seed being sown, cotton sown in lines, better implements and so on.’

‘ Are we to teach all that, Socrates ? ’

‘ You are to make better citizens, and how can you do that if you do not make your school enter into the whole of village life, and become the centre of all village life and activity ? ’

‘ But I only get the boys for a few years, Socrates. The best of them slip off to the high schools as soon as I have given them sufficient grounding to show them that they might learn more elsewhere, and they never come back to the village.’

'As soon in fact as you have opened their eyes to the dullness and squalor of village life, they leave the village for ever!'

'Yes, if you put it that way, I daresay you are right. And the rest of the boys drift away from school as soon as they are of any use to their fathers in the fields.'

'And forget all they have ever learnt, and that wasn't very much either.'

'Yes, I'm afraid so, Socrates, that is the bare truth.'

'So that really your village school is not doing the very least good either to the country or the village. In fact, it is doing harm, because it is using up money, driving the best lads into the towns, and filling the towns with unemployed and thoroughly discontented and disillusioned lads.'

'But what am I to do, Socrates?'

'The stuff you teach them must definitely tell them how to improve their ways and methods of living and farming, and not only tell them, but definitely inspire them to set about making things better in their homes and villages.'

'But they will never act on what they learn at school, Socrates.'

'That depends entirely on how you teach it, masterji. If you teach it like a parrot, no one will take any notice of it, and quite right too. But if you put your heart into it, teach it as if you believed it yourself, and as if you yourself thought it the most important thing there was, and above all if you put it into practice yourself and help the children and their parents to put it into practice, you will soon find a great change come over your school and your village.'

'Why, what will happen, Socrates?'

'Instead of your boys all drifting off before they have got any good out of their schooling, you will find them staying on year after year to see what more they can learn, and you will find them drifting back in the evenings, when they have finally left school, just to see if you can tell them anything more. And you will find the grown-ups beginning to get inquisitive and coming round to see if you will help them a bit too.'

‘ What a wonderful day for our school and our village and our country when that dream of yours comes true.’

‘ It’s no dream, it’s just common sense. The village is thirsting for light, and as soon as the village school can give it light, so soon will what you call my dream come true.’

‘ Is this going on in any other country, Socrates, or have you thought it out just for our country ? ’

‘ They are feeling after the very same thing in other countries, too. In England they are suffering in just the same way as you. The villages are losing their best boys, and the village school is out of touch with village life, and does not teach the children the stuff they really should learn if they are to become good and healthy villagers. Many people there are, therefore, thinking and working and experimenting to find out the remedy for all this.’

‘ Have they been successful, Socrates ? ’

‘ Well, I have seen some very promising attempts, but naturally I have been specially looking for the kind of thing that would help us in India rather than what might be only useful in England. One place I saw was at a village¹ several miles from a very famous university. The school has no infants’ classes, but the boys and girls from some ten villages round come for what we should call the middle classes. They learn all the sort of things I have been talking to you about, as part of their ordinary lessons. Geography includes the measuring of the fields round the school, arithmetic includes farm accounts and so on. Health and better farming and gardening are taught, and not only taught but practised. So far the school is teaching no more than is, I am glad to say, taught in village schools near, and in many others as well nowadays. But here they go further. They have classes (senior classes and junior classes, according to age) for young men and for young women in all the things that villagers should know, woodwork, making and mending domestic utensils and furniture, metal work, the insides of engines, electricity, the chemistry of farming, and so on, and for the girls housekeeping, laundry, making and mending

¹ Sawston, near Cambridge.

clothes, cooking, and all that kind of thing. In this way the school has become what it is actually called, a Village College. The people go on learning as long as they like, and learning all the things that will make them better villagers and keep them from running away to the towns, and will enable them to make their villages more happy, healthy, comfortable places for them and their children to live in. Besides all this and as the natural result, this Village College is the centre of all their social activities, and a very jolly place it is. They have dramas and concerts and lectures and pageants and games, and in short this Village School is both the Village College and the centre of all village life and the inspiration of all village improvement.'

'Wonderful, Socrates, but how can we do all that? Surely that will cost a lot of money, for buildings and staff, and equipment, and everything else?'

'Cost it will, of that there is no doubt, and that particular experiment has been generously helped by large grants of money, which will naturally not be available for you, masterji. But the idea is good and that is what you have to aim at.'

'I quite see the idea and it is wonderful. The school is to be the training ground for life, and whatever the children and even the grown-ups too, should know to make them good, healthy, intelligent villagers, they must learn at school, and not learn as parrots, but in an interesting practical way, and my blackboard must be the village itself, where I must demonstrate all that I am trying to teach. Excellent, Socrates, but how am I to get the grown-ups together, without the facilities provided by your generous people at the Village College you have just described?'

'That is the problem, how to get the people together, so that we may teach and uplift them. Co-operation, combination, is the most difficult thing in the village and yet without it we can never do anything good or permanent. Well, after I had seen the Village College I went on and saw something much more humble, but in my opinion of the most wonderful promise, not only for my country, but for India as well.'

' May I hear about that too, Socrates, if you can spare the time to tell me ? For all you say hard things about us, we teachers are genuinely anxious to do well by our schools and villages. It is not the will that is lacking, only knowledge and the means to do better.'

' Well do I know it, masterji, or I would not waste my time and yours visiting your schools. Well, the next place I visited in England was a very big boys' school, of the kind which they call there a Public School. There the headmaster¹ some years ago had founded what he called a parents' association to help him in everything connected with the school.'

' But how does he prevent them interfering with the running of the school ? '

' The first rule of the association forbids all interference with the discipline or management of the school.'

' I can easily see that a parents' association, as long as it did not interfere with the management of the school, could be most extremely useful to the headmaster in all manner of little ways, but how does that help me in doing what you want me to do in the village ? '

' Listen a moment. This headmaster was also very keen on doing what he could for the villages round about, and he realized, just as you and I do, that the big difficulty in the village is to get people to join together to do anything for their own betterment. The village is full of parties and jealousies, there is no authority to speak or act for the village, and no means of combining the villagers, and without combination and co-operation nothing good can ever be done.'

' That is right, Socrates. If one man does do anything new the others will oppose him, or obstruct him.'

' Well, our headmaster thought, " Why should not the village schoolmasters organize parents' associations to help their little schools, just as I have done for my big school. The child is the centre of the universe, so why not combine the grown-ups of the village to help their children ? " There can be no question of party or caste or religion where children are concerned. The bond of union is their children, whom every

¹ Mr. H. W. Liddle, M.A., headmaster, Bedford Modern School.

A TENDER PLANT

WHO WILL WATER THIS FLOWER
WHEN THE GARDENER GOES?

ORGANIZE
YOURSSELVES

VILLAGE UPLIFT

parent loves and wishes to help. Once we have joined the parents together and they have learnt to work together for the good of their own children, then carefully bring in the idea of working for their own good as well, adult education, health teaching, better farming, everything else that I have been trying to make you teach in your village? Why! one of the associations founded in the way I have described has started a parents' band. That is far enough away from the original idea with which the association was founded, isn't it? If a parents' association is too much for you, try a games club for the young men of the village. Even that will do a world of good and be a very easy means of bringing the people together and enabling you to influence them for their good.'

'I see what you mean, Socrates. Combine the parents for the good of their own children and then gently lead them on to work for their own good. The idea is wonderful, and it will cost nothing, and require no buildings or equipment. It only needs a keen master who is determined to do his whole duty to his village and his country.'

'That is all, masterji, and think of the wonderful opportunity you have got to build up the new village life. If you don't do it there is no one else who will do it, as you are the only educated and trained man in the village. You will have no rival in your work, you will see the village steadily growing healthier, happier and less poor and uncomfortable as your lessons are taken to heart and acted on by the people. Your school will become the centre of village life and the source of all inspiration for the uplift of the villagers, and you yourself will become the best known and best loved person in the village, the guide, philosopher and friend of all.'

'You foresee a great future for the village school and the village schoolmaster, Socrates.'

'Of course I do. Sooner or later, in all countries the village schoolmaster has got to undertake the role I have just described. There is no money to establish any other agency—'

'And no need either, Socrates. By God's grace the village schoolmaster in this, as in other countries, will rise to his great opportunity.'

‘ And just one more point, masterji, before I hurry away.’

‘ More, Socrates ? Surely you have given me enough to chew upon for one day ? ’

‘ Don’t be alarmed, masterji ? This need not worry you. You were hinting some time back that you were not paid too highly. Well, let me tell you one thing ; the common people who pay the taxes are not quite sure whether all this so-called education is really much good after all, and that is one reason, at least, why there is no great enthusiasm for raising the pay of school teachers. And when I see that the village school has no effect on village life except to fill the towns with unemployed, I am very much inclined to agree that a very great deal of the time and money now spent in education is more or less wasted.’

‘ I can quite understand that, Socrates, when you expect so much of the school and the schoolmaster. But I cannot help agreeing with you that if the village school is not going to do more good to the village than it is now doing it had much better be done away with, and the money now spent on it devoted to some other means of helping the villagers out of the many troubles they are in nowadays.’

‘ Well, when your school begins to fulfil its new purpose, and its effect on the village begins to be obvious, I don’t think you will find that the people who pay the taxes will any-longer grudge you an adequate wage for the work you do.’

‘ Wages are an undoubted incentive to work, Socrates, but I do not think you will ever find us failing to do our best because we think that we are not paid as much as we are worth. You have now put an ideal before me and I will strive to achieve it, and if I fail to reach the high level you want me to aim at, it will not be for want of trying.’

XXXII

TWO KINDS OF SERVANTS

THINGS are getting worse and worse, Socrates,' said a zamindar to Socrates, as he entered the village.

' Well, if you zamindars are hard up, the rest of us must all starve soon,' said Socrates, ' as you provide for us all.'

' How so, Socrates ? You are our masters and we are your servants.'

' Not a bit ; it 's the other way about. You zamindars produce everything in this country, and so you are the masters and we others the servants.'

' How can that be, when we are so poor, Socrates ? '

' You are poor because you spend your money badly and for no other reason. Look here, chaudhriji, you have travelled a bit, I can see. What do the manufactures and the mines, and all the other things like them, produce in India compared with agriculture ? '

' Very little indeed, Socrates.'

' Then, practically the whole of the wealth of India comes out of the soil ? '

' Yes, that is so.'

' And goes through your hands ? '

' Yes, I suppose so.'

' And you give it to all the rest of the people, so that we are all your servants, zamindarji ? '

' I wish you were, Socrates ! I can't see how that can be, as it should be the master who is rich and the servant poor. But in this case it is the zamindar who is poor and every one else rich.'

' Perhaps it depends on the kind of servants the zamindar employs,' said Socrates.

' How do you make that out, Socrates ? I have no choice in the matter. As I find things so I carry on.'

' The choice is solely yours,' said Socrates. ' Let me explain. You have two kinds of servants, one productive and one unproductive.'

' What does that mean, Socrates ? '

' Well, one kind of servant works for you and the more of him you employ the better off you are. The other kind is the opposite. The more of him you employ the worse off you are. In fact he is like a tick or a leech on your cattle that sucks their blood and does them no good, but only harm.'

' I am sure I have none of that kind, Socrates.'

' Yes you have; practically all your servants are of the leech kind.'

' Impossible, Socrates.'

' I'm afraid it's true, painfully true. It happens this way: The zamindar says, I like two things, shows and fighting, and I will give the produce of my land to have them in full. Right! Along come all your servants to provide you with shows and fighting. For shows you want the jeweller, the money-lender, the firework maker, the bandmaster, the liquor contractor, the provider of wedding feasts and funeral feasts and all the other feasts and ceremonies that you like so much, and they all settle down and batten on you. For your fighting, there must be petition-writers, copyists, witnesses true and false, advocates, barristers, judges, magistrates, munsiffs, jails and jailors, police officers and policemen, court buildings and lock-ups, punitive police posts and all the rest of the organization of up-to-date quarrelling and fighting and party feuds!'

' These are all your unproductive servants that bring you in no return or profit, and the more of them you use the poorer you become.'

' But how are they my servants, Socrates?'

' Well, if you stopped fighting and stopped extravagant expenditure they would all disappear, wouldn't they?'

' Most of them certainly would.'

' Then if they come and go at your bidding they are surely your servants?'

' That seems correct. But what are the other kind—the productive kind that you mentioned?'

' They are the doctor, the schoolmaster, the schoolmistress, the trained dai, the vaccinator, the teacher of farming, the breeder of stud bulls and stallions, the veterinary doctor,

the producer of machines and implements, the builder of roads, canals and railways, the producer of new seeds and crops, the teacher of new and better ways of living and farming. These are all productive, that is to say the more you have of them the happier, healthier and wealthier you will be.'

'Then give me this kind. I will have them, and only them.'

'But you can't have both kinds, zamindarji. If you have the first you can't have the second. And the more of the first you have the fewer of the second you can have. Do you realize that one sessions judge with all his court and the counsel that argue there, and the witnesses, assessors and litigants and everything necessary to enable you to fight and kill each other in the best style cost far more every year than a big high school and a big hospital put together?'

'I never thought of it that way, Socrates.'

'Then think now! Each murder probably costs as much as an Anglo-vernacular middle school working for a whole year, and many a wedding costs more than the whole annual cost of a rural dispensary.'

'Socrates, you amaze me!'

'You are longing for trained dais and female doctors, aren't you?'

'Certainly, we are. Our women are in terrible need of medical aid and trained dais.'

'Well, bear this in mind. The money spent in each village goldsmith's shop is sufficient to run a female dispensary and to train and pay for a good dai. The cost of the ordinary Section 323 I.P.C.¹ case would suffice for a stud bull, and the money spent on liquor would metal all the roads in the Punjab.'

'Stop, Socrates! You simply horrify me with your picture of my own folly.'

'We are now going through what we call a depression, and the few you have of the second or productive kind of servants are being actually reduced because you have so many of the unproductive kind and are so loath to give them up. If you really want the second kind—'

'Of course I do, Socrates; how can you doubt it?'

¹ The offence of simple hurt.

'Of course I doubt it. Don't I know that even the present fall in prices hasn't changed your wasteful ways?'

'It really is changing them, Socrates.'

'Very slowly, I fear, zamindarji. Government had to remit a big slice of the land revenue and the abiana because you still cling to so many of your unproductive servants that you said you couldn't pay for the productive ones. If you really do want to keep and increase your productive servants, you must hurry up and get rid of very many more of the unproductive kind.'

XXXIII

SOCRATES SATISFIED

SOCRATES came into the village and visited a small but beautifully clean and tidy home, with plenty of windows and ventilators, no signs of a chakki or an upla, and with pretty and spotlessly clean children playing in the yard, while their mother went on with her work, which was the mending of a home-made woolly vest for the baby. One of the elder boys was in boy scout uniform and was teaching his smaller brother how to tie knots.

The father was feeding his fowls, lovely big white hens, in a large wired-in cage near the stable where the cattle were tied.

There were flowers growing in the yard, fed by the waste water from the house. Some distance away could be seen the screen of the pit-latrine.

'How many eggs to-day, chaudhriji?' asked Socrates.

'Oh, plenty, Socrates,' said the man. 'I've never wanted for eggs since I learnt to keep poultry and bought a setting of prize egg-laying hens at the farm. And what fine big eggs I get, too!'

'Good,' said Socrates. 'But what took you to the poultry farm?'

'I went to prosecute a criminal law suit, and while I was waiting I saw the hens and in the end I compromised my case and learnt about the hens instead.'

'But who looks after your hens when you go to your fields ?'

'Oh, there are several to do that, Socrates. My eldest boy is a boy scout and they learn everything. When he's at school my wife does any work that's necessary.'

'Your wife ! What does she know about modern poultry keeping ?'

'Here, mother,' called the man. 'Socrates is saying evil things of you. He says you don't understand poultry keeping.'

'Oh, don't I, Socrates !' said his wife. 'I suppose you think that all I know about is corn-grinding, upla-making and jewellery-wearing ?'

'That's about all, I suppose,' said Socrates.

'Do you see any jewellery on me or my children ?'

'No, I can't say I do.'

'Are any of them dirty or badly clothed ?'

'No, they are beautifully clean, and all have woolly clothes on for this cold weather.'

'Can you see any pock-marks, any bad eyes, running noses, any signs of ill-health or neglect ?'

'No, I can't. They look as good as my own children.'

'Thank you, Socrates. You couldn't say more than that. Now look inside the house and see if you can find a chakki. Look all round for dung-cakes, too.'

'I can find nothing that shouldn't be there and I see everything that should be there, from mosquito nets to a medicine chest, covers for the food, and a wheelbarrow for the rubbish.'

'Then don't say again that I know nothing,' said the woman.

'But—but—but—I don't understand,' said Socrates.

'You belong to this district, don't you ?'

'Yes, certainly. What's the matter, eh ?'

'Am I dreaming, or is this all real ? Will someone please pinch me to make sure I am awake ?'

'No, you're not dreaming. It's all quite real, Socrates,' said the woman. 'I was educated in my village school with my brother. The teacher taught us reading and writing and

his wife taught us sewing, knitting, and all the other things a home-keeper must know.'

' You're a lucky man,' said Socrates, turning to the husband, ' you are indeed, to have an educated and cultured wife like this.'

' I am, and I know it, Socrates. Home is sweet to me and I am never tired of working to make it more comfortable. No quarrelling or litigation for me! Home's best, Socrates, once you have a real home, as I have now.'

' That's right,' said Socrates. ' One trained woman will make a home, but twenty uneducated women cannot.'

' But there's lots more to show you, Socrates, than what you see here.'

' No need to show me,' said Socrates. ' Once the housewife is trained and educated and the home is happy, all else follows.'

' That is quite true,' said the master of the house. ' Now that my home is in the care of an educated woman, who knows how to spend my money, I am free to give my whole attention to my farm and my village. You will probably not be surprised to hear that I am the chairman of my village co-operative bank and a member of my village panchayat. Our village is clean, our holdings have been consolidated, we sow good seed, keep good cattle, use good implements and fence our fields. When we put our holdings together we found that we had several acres to spare—'

' That always happens, owing to the reduction in the number of boundary banks.'

' Well, that extra space has been tidied up for use as a playing field, both for the children and the grown-ups, and we have a very good games club, playing matches with those villages round about which have begun to copy us. Life is so simple and easy now, I keep wondering how we managed to exist at all in the bad old days when we were unable to join together to do anything, were all jealous of each other and prevented each other from trying to leave the old ways of living. The waste that went on in those days, the ridiculous way we lived and farmed, the utterly unnecessary suffering and poverty, the—'

'Don't I know it?' said Socrates. 'God was indeed merciful to you in those dark ages, or there would be none of you alive to-day.'

'Perfectly true, Socrates. We are now happy, comfortable, healthy, and, in spite of far lower prices than we enjoyed then, much better off. We are not rich, mark you, and we don't need to be. Our wants are few, our tastes are simple, and we have sufficient. We can afford to have a holiday or go to a fair, and we can afford a few bright clothes or toys for the children. One or two newspapers come to us every week, one for farmers, another for housewives, another for children and so on ; we pay our share of a co-operative health society, which provides a trained nurse and a trained *dai* for when they are wanted, and also doctors, male and female. But we don't get the diseases we used to when we lived in darkness and dirt ! My goodness ! I shudder at the thought of how we lived a few years back. We are so healthy nowadays that some of the younger ones that never knew the old days, consider that we are wasting our money by joining the health society, and would like to drop out of it.'

'That is like some other countries I know, where generations of vaccination have made people forget what small-pox is like, and they go about preaching against vaccination.'

'Yes, there is never an end of work, if we wish to hold on to the new life we have learnt to live. But the worst of the struggle is over now. We have learnt to work together, to pay for what we want and to help ourselves. Above all, our wives are now our partners, and know as much as we do and are as keen as we are on making village life worth living. We save in good times so that we need not borrow in bad times, we bring up our children, boys and girls, to the new life we now enjoy ourselves, and I see no reason why we should ever slip back to the life of squalor, poverty and ill health that we had to endure before. We are ready to join in, and put our money into, any good scheme that you can convince us will be of use to us or our country, whether it is wireless broadcasting or—'

'In fact you have achieved the new village life.'

'Yes, we have, and at far less cost than the old !'

GLOSSARY

Âbiâna : water-rate charged for the use of water from Government canals

Bâbu : quill-driver ; also used in the village of any stranger dressed otherwise than in village home-spun.

Bâjra : the lesser millet, a food grain. The plant is from five to eight or nine feet high, with a head rather like a bull-rush, and is one of the commonest monsoon crops.

Band : pronounced bund, and means an embankment of any kind, small or great.

Banjar : uncultivated land.

Bank : although an English word it is pronounced bunk, on Hunterian principles, and is used for all forms of co-operative societies.

Banni : thicket, often set aside from time immemorial as a reserve for the village, with a religious embargo on cutting live trees or grass.

Bigha : a measure of land, varying in size in different places, and according to whether it is Kacha or Pacca. A kacha bigha is usually a fifth of an acre.

Burkha : domino worn by purdah-observing ladies. Almost unknown in the villages, where purdah, owing to its practical difficulties, is very rare.

Chakki : hand mill for grinding corn. Being replaced in many parts of the Punjab by bullock-driven mills or power mills. A very common objection, however, to the power mill is that the heat generated by the fast-moving stones is said to destroy the food value (' life ' is the appropriate Urdu word for it) of the flour.

Chârpoy : wooden bedstead, with mattress of inter-laced string. These beds are in universal use in the village for sitting upon, as chairs are still a rarity in most villages. In hot countries, too, people like to put their feet up when they sit down, so that the ' string bed ' has much to be said for it as a substitute for the chair. Its only objection (and that is no objection in the eyes of too many !) is that it has no back and makes sitting up difficult.

Chaudri : a leader or elder of a village or of a caste or profession.

Chaupâl: village meeting place, usually a simple building on a raised plinth with a similarly raised platform outside.

Cherri: The greater millet, a monsoon crop, sown thick for fodder and cut before the grain has ripened.

Chokra: a lad.

Chumâr: hereditary leather-worker.

Coimbatore cane: sugar-canies imported from Java and naturalized and developed at the Government farm of Coimbatore in South India.

Company Bâgh: bâgh means a garden and Company Bâgh the public gardens. The phrase is a relic of the days of John Company.

Daffedâr: non-commissioned officer of an Indian cavalry regiment.

Dai: midwife. This extremely difficult, delicate and important work is usually entrusted, very illogically, as a sort of hereditary profession to certain menial and untouchable castes.

Darzi: tailor.

Deputy: magistrate or revenue officer.

Dhobi: hereditary washerman.

8A wheat: the best wheat seed in the Punjab, developed at Lyallpur Government agricultural station.

F.A.: first examination in arts, preliminary to the B.A.

Gharwali: ghar means a home or house, and wali the person (feminine) owing, owned by, or in charge of it. In village language gharwali means a wife.

Ghi: clarified butter, made by simmering the milk over a fire of cakes of dried cow-dung.

Havildâr: non-commissioned officer of an Indian infantry regiment.

Hukam: an order.

Inshâlla: God willing.

Jamadâr: lowest rank of Indian military commissioned officer.

Jamadâri: pressure by jacks-in-office. The word jamadâr is often used for a foreman.

Jî: a suffix implying respect and often affection as well.

Kabaddi: a national game not unlike prisoners' base. In the Sialkot District of the Punjab the rules have been codified for school and village matches.

Khâti : hereditary joiner.

Lakh : 100,000.

Lambardâr : hereditary village headman, rapidly losing his power and influence owing to the effect of modern life, centralized administration, etc.

Lâthi : quarter staff, often reinforced with brass ferrules ; the constant companion of every countryman and his ready ally in the settlement of all disputes.

Lohâr : hereditary iron-worker.

Maund : a measure of weight, about 80 pounds avoirdupois, and divided into 40 seers.

Mohalla : subdivision of a town or big village, corresponding to the 'quarter' of an English town.

Munsiff : subordinate civil judge.

Naib Tahsildâr : junior revenue officer.

Nai Zindgi : *New Life*, a flourishing village weekly newspaper, founded and run by the Jhelum District Community Council in the Punjab.

Panchâyat : pâñch means five ; a village or tribal council, not necessarily consisting of five members. Under a recently passed law village councils are slowly being set up in the Punjab and elsewhere.

Pardah : seclusion of women. Purdah means a curtain.

Patwâri : village revenue accountant and recorder of rights in land.

Pice : copper coin worth about one farthing.

Pilau : a savoury and satisfying dish containing rice, meat, cloves, raisins and other spices and delicacies, a national dish from Albania to North India.

Pipal : *ficus religiosus*, a much venerated shade tree.

Pirkaudi : North Punjab national game, of, I feel certain, Greek origin. The rules have been codified by Mr. Waite, of the Punjab police.

Puggery : head-dress made by winding a strip of cloth round the head. A puggery is extremely difficult to tie well, and, when achieved, is the most ornamental and impressive head-dress in the world. Puggeries are seen at their best in Rajputana, the Punjab, and in the Indian army. In the last-named it is part of the uniform.

Râja : besides being the title of a ruler of a native state, the râja is an honorific title of members of certain land-owning tribes in the North Punjab.

Sâhib : form of address implying respect.

Seer : measure of weight, equal to two pounds avoirdupois.

Section 323 : the offence of simple hurt in the Indian Penal Code
Shâbâsh : well done !

Shâmilât : village common land.

Subedâr : senior Indian commissioned officer of infantry.

Tahsildâri : a tahsildar is a revenue and executive officer of Government in charge of a tahsil, a sub-division of a District, and having an area of several hundred square miles.

Teli : hereditary oil-presser.

Upla : cow-dung cakes. Cow-dung is kneaded by the village women with a little chaff into flat cakes which are then slapped on to the walls to dry, and afterwards stored for use as fuel, principally to simmer the milk for the making of ghi. Cow-dung cakes were made and burnt in England until at least the end of the eighteenth century.

Wâh, Wâh ! : exclamation of astonishment, admiration, contempt, etc.

Zaildâr : a rural notable and leader in the Punjab, appointed by the Government and entrusted with certain duties and privileges, and paid a small honorarium for his services.

Zamindâr : an owner or cultivator of agricultural land.

